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Encyclopaedia of INDIAN RULERS

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THE EARL OF AUCKLAND

AND THE FIRST AFGHAN WAR

By
CAPTAIN L. J. TROTTER

SET IN THIRTY SIX VOLUMES
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PREFACE

THE story of Lord Auckland's Indian career, as told in this volume, seemed historically incomplete without the chapters which record the measures taken or sanctioned by Lord Ellenborough for the subsequent advance of our troops to Kábul, and for their final retirement from Afghánistán. To the materials used by Kaye and Durand in their respective histories, time has added little that is either new or of much importance. The documents, old and new, consulted in the making of this little volume, are indicated, as occasion arises, in the footnotes. Kaye's great work, in its later editions, and Durand's unfinished narrative still hold the field between them as trustworthy guides to a just appreciation of the policy which led to the Afghán War of 1838–42. To the revised Blue-Book of 1859, and the debate raised by Mr. Dunlop's motion of the 19th of March, 1861, we owe the full and final confirmation of Kaye's charges against the compilers of the 'garbled Blue-Book' of 1839. In telling the dismal story of events which happened fifty years ago,

I have passed perhaps too lightly over the crowning injustice which charged the Indian revenues with the fifteen millions sterling expended on an enterprise conceived and followed out in aid of British interests alone.

L. J. T.

September 1925.

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NOTE

The orthography of proper names follows the system adopted by the Indian Government for the *Imperial Gazetteer of India*. That system, while adhering to the popular spelling of very well-known places, such as Punjab, Poona, Deccan, &c., employs in all other cases the vowels with the following uniform sounds:—

a, as in woman: *á*, as in father: *i*, as in kin: *í*, as in intrígue: *o*, as in cold: *u*, as in bull: *ú*, as in rúral.

LORD AUCKLAND

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

WHEN Lord William Bentinck, sailed down the Húglí in March, 1835, the post he had filled so beneficently for seven years fell for a time to the charge of his second-in-council, the genial and large-minded Sir Charles Metcalfe, who had been trained under Lord Wellesley in the best school of Anglo-Indian statesmanship, had since helped to mould the policy of one Native Court after another, and had finally borne a leading part in all the great measures of Bentinck's government.

It was only as provisional Governor-General that Metcalfe held a post once filled by Warren Hastings and Sir John Shore, both like him civil servants of the East India Company. Had the Court of Directors been allowed their own way, the provisional tenure would have been made permanent. They had already declared in effect that no other man than Metcalfe could be trusted to carry on the reforming process which Bentinck with his aid had set on foot. But the

Ministry of that day held fast to Canning's rule, that the highest office in India should invariably be filled from England alone, and the Directors had to content themselves with a weighty protest against the new system of excluding their servants from an office which some of them had hitherto filled with great advantage to the common weal.

Early in 1835, during the short-lived Ministry of Sir Robert Peel, the choice of a permanent successor to Bentinck fell upon Lord Heytesbury, a diplomatist of fair repute. But a few months later Peel's nominee was set aside by the new Premier, Lord Melbourne, who reclaimed the post for one of his own colleagues, in the teeth of precedents set by his political opponents twice within thirty years. In September of that year, shortly after Bentinck's arrival, the vacant post was conferred upon Lord Auckland, an able and popular member of the Whig Cabinet[1].

George Eden, second son of Pitt's Lord Auckland, was born in August, 1784, at Eden Farm, near Beckenham in Kent. His father, William Eden, third son of a Durham baronet, had entered the House of Commons in 1774, had within two years become President of the new Board of Trade, and in 1778 was one of the five Commissioners sent to America by Lord North, to try and patch up a peace with the revolted colonies. As Chief Secretary for Ireland under Lord Carlisle, he sat by virtue of his office in the Irish Parliament. In 1783, Eden and

[1] Thornton's *British Empire in India*, vol. vi.

Pitt were colleagues in the Shelburne Ministry. The two men found themselves in close agreement on all questions of economy and finance. During Pitt's long tenure of power Eden was employed on several important missions to France, Spain, Holland, and the United States. In 1793, Pitt made his friend a peer under the title of Lord Auckland. On Pitt's retirement in 1801, Auckland withdrew from active politics into the rural privacy of Eden Farm, where he died of heart disease in 1814, four years after the death of his eldest son. His wife was sister to Lord Minto, a former Governor-General of India, and his eldest daughter, Pitt's first and only love, was married to the Earl of Buckinghamshire, whose family has furnished more than one Governor to Madras.

The new Lord Auckland had taken his degree at Oxford in 1806, had been called three years later to the Bar, and in 1811 had entered the House of Commons, where he voted steadily with the Whigs, until his father's death removed him to 'another place.' When the Whigs in 1830 returned to power after their long exile, Lord Auckland at once found a seat in Lord Grey's Cabinet as President of the Board of Trade. Four years later he became First Lord of the Admiralty under Grey's successor, Lord Melbourne. Going out with his leader in December, he returned to the same post under the same Premier in the following April. In November, 1835, Lord Auckland sailed for India round the Cape, the Court of Directors having first sped their parting guest with

earnest injunctions to follow carefully in the footsteps of his peaceful and reforming predecessor[1]

By that time the Directors had begun to recant the praises of their former favourite, Sir Charles Metcalfe, who had had the hardihood to carry through his Council, without previous reference to Leadenhall Street, an Act which declared the Press in India as free as the Press at home. Practical freedom the Anglo-Indian Press had enjoyed for some years past, but the harsh laws under which Silk Buckingham had been deported in 1823 had not been repealed before Bentinck resigned his post. Aided and encouraged by his likeminded colleague, the future Lord Macaulay, Metcalfe promptly carried out the reform which his predecessor had deemed inevitable; and the Act of August, 1835, made the Press free of all State-control, within the limits prescribed by the law of England. The question, indeed, as Macaulay put it in one of his trenchant Minutes, was not whether the Press should be free, but whether, being free, it should be called free. 'We are exposed'—he added—'to all the dangers—dangers, I conceive, greatly exaggerated—of a free Press, and at the same time we contrive to incur all the opprobrium of a censorship[2].'

This measure, which brought the law into close accordance with the facts of his day, brought Metcalfe's Indian career to a premature close. He had accepted the Government of Agra, when that great

[1] *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. xvi; Thornton.
[2] Sir G. Trevelyan's *Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*.

province was raised for the moment into a separate Presidency. In March, 1836, after Lord Auckland's arrival in Calcutta, Metcalfe consented to go to Agra on the lower level of Lieutenant-Governor, until some higher appointment fell in. But his eyes were presently opened to the change which his recent policy had wrought in the temper of his 'honourable masters.' When the Governorship of Madras fell vacant, his obvious claims to the succession were ignored by the same body which had once fought so hard for the right to make him a Governor-General. The Court of Directors turned a deaf ear even to the pleadings of Lord William Bentinck, who fared no better with the Premier himself.

Metcalfe's letter to the India House touching the reports he had heard of the Court's displeasure drew forth a dilatory and curt reply:—'The continuance in you provisionally,' they said, 'of the highest office which it is in the power of the Court to confer, might have satisfied you that their confidence had not been withdrawn.' The answer received in August, 1837, to a letter written about a year before failed to satisfy Metcalfe, who forthwith tendered his resignation to Lord Auckland, and prepared to quit the country where his thirty-eight years of unbroken, able, and conspicuous service seemed to have been wiped out by an alleged insult to the dignity and the prejudices of the East India Board [1].

A kindly letter from Lord Auckland expressed his

[1] Kaye's *Life of Lord Metcalfe.*

deep regret at the loss for India of its best officer, and for himself of his best help-mate.

Bidding farewell in December to his sorrowing friends at Agra, and exchanging some last words with the Governor-General at Cawnpur, Metcalfe went down to Calcutta, where he encountered a daily, almost hourly storm of farewells from residents of all classes and colours, during the fortnight before he sailed home. No Indian ruler since Warren Hastings had been honoured with so full-voiced a manifestation of popular sympathy. At the age of fifty-three—he had gone out to India a boy of fifteen—Metcalfe exchanged the service of which he had long been the pride and ornament for a career not less distinguished under the Crown, a career cut short by the disease which killed him in 1846. As his biographer truly said of him, 'there are few examples on record of men in whom the finest moral qualities have been united with so healthy an intellect—so sound an understanding.' Lord William Bentinck spoke of him as a colleague whose behaviour was 'of the noblest kind,' who 'never cavilled on a trifle, and never yielded to me on a point of importance.' His genial temper created—in Marshman's words—'a perpetual sunshine around him;' and none who knew him, however slightly, can forget that winning charm of manner, that sweet, unstudied courtesy, which placed all who approached him at their ease, and captured without seeming effort the goodwill of rivals and opponents.

CHAPTER II

Lord Auckland's Domestic Policy

On the 20th of March, 1836, the new Governor-General took the usual oaths of office in Government House. At the farewell banquet given him by the Court of Directors, Lord Auckland had avowed his exultation at the opportunity thus afforded him of 'doing good to his fellow-creatures, of promoting education and knowledge, of improving the administration of justice in India, of extending the blessings of good government and happiness to millions of her people.' These phrases had not then lost their novelty, nor had those who heard them any cause to doubt the speaker's good faith. They felt that Bentinck's successor honestly meant to carry on the work which Bentinck had begun.

In India everything seemed to betoken the continuance of a peace which had lasted already for ten years. From the Sutlej to Cape Comorin, from the Castle-Palace of the Mughal at Delhi to the Nizám's Capital at Haidarábád, not a cloud appeared above the political horizon. Beyond the Sutlej our old and faithful ally, Ranjít Singh, had lately abandoned his

schemes of conquest in the neighbouring provinces of Sind. In the North-Western Provinces the new settlement of the land revenue was going steadily forward under the control of Robert Bird. English officers were successfully teaching the wild tribes of Mairwára, Khándesh, and Gúmsúr to forego their barbarous rites and practices in exchange for the blessings of civilized rule. The Indian Treasuries were full to overflowing. Cold-mannered, reticent, shy. good-natured, robust of figure, disliking all pomp and parade, and delighting in regular official work, Lord Auckland was eminently fitted by temperament and long experience to discharge the most exacting duties of quiet times.

Of his ability there was no doubt. A few years later Lord Fitzgerald, as President of the Board of Control, testified warmly to the strong impression which Lord Auckland's despatches and State papers had made upon him; adding that 'he was, with the sole exception of Lord John Russell, by far the ablest member of his party. His views most statesmanlike, and his government of India particularly just.' According to Charles Greville who knew him well, 'his understanding was excellent, his temper placid, his taste and tact exquisite, his disposition, notwithstanding his apparent gravity, cheerful, and under his cold exterior there was a heart overflowing with human kindness, and with the deepest feelings of affection, charity, and benevolence.' Throughout his career he seems to have made no personal enemies,

and many warm friends of all political colours. The two sisters who shared his household life in India loved him fervently—in Greville's words, as 'a husband, a brother, and a friend combined in one[1].' The weak point in his character as a statesman was a certain diffidence in his own judgement, a diffidence which was soon to lead him, his party, and his country, into disaster.

The new rule, however, began well. Lord Auckland had not been two months in office, when his Government passed what the English in Calcutta were pleased to call the 'Black Act.' It was a measure introduced by Macaulay, then Law Member of Council, for doing away with a fine old anomaly in the administration of civil justice. Until then any European cast in a civil suit before one of the *Mufasal* or country courts might carry his appeal, not to the *Sadr Adálat*, or High Court of the Company, but to the Supreme Court of the Crown. The anomaly was of course unjust and invidious; but many of our countrymen in India cherished it as one of their dearest privileges, a kind of bulwark to British ascendency in the East.

There was no valid reason for maintaining a privilege which implied that the Sadr Court, composed of tried and selected members of the Company's Service, might be good enough for the Native millions, but could not be trusted to administer common justice to a few hundred white men. 'If it is not fit for

[1] *The Greville Memoirs* (Second Part), vols. ii. and iii.

for some of the frantic outbursts, which in their brutality recalled certain flights of Burke's oratory in Westminster Hall.

Nevertheless, in September of this very year, 1836, Macaulay wrote to the Court of Directors a despatch in which he stoutly contended, not only that 'we acted wisely when we passed the law on the subject of the Press,' but also that 'we should act most unwisely if we were now to repeal that law.' His own estimate of the limited influence of the Press in India, whether for good or evil, was amply justified by after-events. The agitation against the Black Act was presently transferred from Calcutta to the House of Commons. In March, 1838, a Committee of Inquiry was moved for; but the Melbourne Ministry rallied to the support of their colleague in India, and the motion had to be dropped[1].

In the cause of education Macaulay, as President of the Committee of Public Instruction, found a willing and useful patron in the new Governor-General. Under Lord William Bentinck the English language had been made the vehicle of instruction for Natives in the higher schools, the one door to preferment in the public service. By way of spurring the ambition of Native scholars to gain more than a smattering of Western culture, Lord Auckland founded a certain number of scholarships for the principal Government schools. At the same time he would not ignore the claim of the millions to learn some rudiments of

[1] *Life of Lord Macaulay.*

knowledge through their own mother-tongues. From this text indeed the Court of Directors had been preaching for several years past, warning their servants not to underrate the importance of vernacular teaching in a country where 'a thorough study of the English language can be placed within the reach of a very small proportion' of the people. Macaulay himself had always recognized the wisdom of this doctrine, and his Committee put forth a manifesto in favour of employing the vernacular languages in all the primary schools. Before he left India in 1838 his efforts to organize a general system of popular schooling were beginning to bear such modest fruit as the scanty funds at his Committee's disposal would allow[1].

Lord Auckland helped to further the new growth of medical science among a people who had hitherto walked in the darkness of old-world theories and traditions. The last days of Bentinck's rule had witnessed the founding of a reformed Medical College in Calcutta, for the training of Native students in every branch of medical science, according to the best European lights, by means of the English language alone. The College opened with a full staff of professors, a library, a museum, and all the appliances needed for the working of so large a scheme. Many persons shook their heads over an experiment which seemed to war against Native prejudice. How, they asked, can you expect a good Hindu to defile himself by cutting up a dead body? Until then, dissection

[1] Kaye's *Administration of the East India Company.*

had been practised only on goats and a few other animals. But in 1837 four of the most promising students in the new college might be seen using their scalpels on a human corpse, and many more were soon to follow their example. Similar colleges sprang up in Bombay and Madras. In course of time India came to possess a school of medical science worthy to compare with some of its Western rivals. Medical schools of various grades have since been established in many parts of our Indian Empire, furnishing useful assistants to the medical chiefs, filling the public hospitals and dispensaries with a large staff of skilful workers, and relieving the ordinary ailments of the people.

On his way up the country in the cold season of 1837–8, the Governor-General had a near view of the horrors caused by a famine which was then raging over the whole Doáb, from Allahábád to Delhi. The drought which began in 1836 had now turned the broad plains between the Jumna and the Ganges into a brown sandy waste. There was little food left either for men or cattle. Multitudes of starving wretches thronged the road from Cawnpur to Agra, dying in heaps by the wayside, or trying to live upon roots, berries, and refuse straw, glad even to pick out the grain which had passed undigested through the bodies of troop-horses on the march. Private charity saved here and there a few lives, and many sufferers found strength to earn their daily meal of rice or coarse grain on the relief-works which the Government had started in the stricken districts. But in

spite of private and public effort, 800,000 persons died of hunger or disease, while the consequent remissions of land revenue fell not far short of a million sterling.

Humane by nature, Lord Auckland gave freely from his private purse in aid of the State funds towards the relief of human suffering; and his example encouraged others to spend their money and their time for the same good purpose. As a prudent statesman he recognized the need of preventive measures against the recurrence of a calamity which struck through the people at the State itself. The age of railways had hardly begun, even in Europe, nor had any large scheme of irrigation been as yet devised for that part of India whose harvests depended on the due amount and distribution of the yearly rainfall. Lord Hastings indeed had made a good beginning with the canals in the Delhi district, the cost of which, he declared, would be 'money laid out more profitably for the Company than it could be in any other mode of application.' But it remained for Colonel John Colvin of the Bengal Engineers to lay before Lord Auckland a scheme far more ambitious than any hitherto carried out. Lord Auckland readily sanctioned a full and searching inquiry into the probable working of Colvin's plans. A careful survey of the whole ground, conducted by Major Cautley, afterwards known to fame as Sir Proby Cautley, maker of the great Ganges Canal, resulted in the Report of May, 1840. In this Report Colvin's great project,

whose ultimate success was to be linked with the names of Cautley and Lord Dalhousie, was shown to be entirely practicable [1].

The Court of Directors were not slow to sanction an undertaking designed to irrigate the whole of the province which had been invaded by the recent famine. Before Lord Auckland left India, a Committee of three of the Company's ablest officers, Abbott, Baker, and Cautley, had reported upon the best means of carrying out the Court's decree. But the Afghán War had drained the Indian Treasury; and Auckland's successor, when he found time to consider the subject, stood out for his own modifications of the original scheme. Instead of a canal for irrigation, he insisted on making a great navigable waterway, whose surplus waters alone, if any, might be used for the benefit of the adjacent fields. Lord Hardinge, however, with the approval of the India House, reverted to the old rational belief in irrigation as the first requisite for a thirsty land. Urged on by James Thomason, then Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces, Hardinge resolved in 1847 to push the work forward as fast as the means then available would allow. With greater energy and more abundant means Lord Dalhousie took up the unfinished task, and in April, 1854, the Ganges Canal became a living and a memorable fact.

[1] Kaye's *Administration of the East India Company*; Hon. Emily Eden's *Up the Country*; *Report of the Indian Famine Commission*, 1880; Sir R. Temple's *India in* 1880.

During Lord Auckland's prolonged absence from Calcutta the question of education still figured in the business of his Council[1]. The old controversy between the advocates of English teaching and the Orientalists or friends of Sanskrit and Arabic had not been wholly silenced by the victory of the former in 1835. Under Bentinck's Resolution of March 7, certain grants of public money had been withdrawn from those Native colleges in which the old classical languages of the East were alone taught. By means of those grants many a poor scholar had been enabled to pursue the studies on which his future depended. In his Minute of November, 1839, Lord Auckland sought to redress a manifest grievance by decreeing that Government scholarships should not be confined to English-teaching colleges alone. This concession to a just demand annoyed the more thorough-going friends of European learning; and the zealous Scotch missionary, Dr. Alexander Duff, who had pioneered the triumph of the modern or Anglicist school, took up his parable against any compromise with the absurd old systems of the East. But even Dr. Duff's eloquence failed to convince the Government of its alleged backsliding [2].

A few months later Lord Auckland's Council enacted certain reforms demanded or suggested by the changed conditions of our rule in India. Many

[1] Kaye; Sir H. Lawrence's *Essays*; Thornton's *Indian Public Works*; Dalhousie's *Farewell Minute*.

[2] Wilson's *History of India*; *Dictionary of National Biography*.

of our countrymen had for some time been railing against the spectacle of a strong Christian Government allying itself in various ways with the religious rites and observances of Hindu idolaters and Muhammadan fanatics. Even Leadenhall Street insisted that the time had gone by when their troops should parade at Native festivals, when salutes should be fired and offerings from the Company presented to images of Hindu gods, when the civil officer of the district should be ordered to take part in the ceremonial honours paid to Durgá or Jagannáth. Nor was it seemly for English officers to have aught to do with the management of Native temples and religious endowments. In April, 1840, Lord Auckland severed the old connexion between the Government and the popular creeds of India. The management of the temple-revenues was to be handed over to the priests or their representatives; and the presence of Company's troops and Company's officers on duty at popular festivals was strictly forbidden. In all matters touching their religion the people were to be left entirely to themselves. Whether the Government were right in abolishing the Pilgrim Tax also, is a question to which there were two sides. It seemed to many to be rather a concession to missionary clamour, than a return to sound economic rule. The tax was light in its incidence, easy to collect, and was paid without a murmur. It yielded a revenue of £30,000 a year.

CHAPTER III

THE NATIVE STATES OF INDIA

IN the middle of 1837 the peace of India was ruffled for a few hours by the bold stroke for power of an ambitious lady at Lucknow. On the night of July 7 died, rather suddenly, the worthless Nasír-ud-dín, King of Oudh; for the old title of Nawáb Wazír had been exchanged in 1819 for that of Sháh or King. It was thought by many that he had been poisoned by his adoptive mother, the Pádsháhi Begam, whose reputed son, Múnna Ján, he had formally disowned. Tidings of his fatal illness had already reached the British Resident, Colonel John Low, one of those soldier-politicals whose feats of arms have been outshone by their wisdom in council. Sending off a hasty message to the Brigadier in cantonments, he went straight to the royal palace with two of his officers, to prepare for placing the king's uncle, as rightful heir by Muhammadan law, on the vacant throne. Before that heir was ready to bear his part in the coming ceremonial, the Begam and her followers were for the moment masters of the position. The few Englishmen in the palace, with the heir of

their choice, were virtual prisoners, while an armed rabble filled the great hall, in the middle of which the Begam's favourite sat enthroned, the Begam herself looking on from behind the curtains of her palanquin.

After a vain attempt to dissuade her from a hopeless enterprise, the Resident with his small party contrived to escape from the scene of tumult. Outside the palace they found the troops who had been sped thither in answer to Low's summons. After some vain parleying with the insurgents, Low called upon the Queen to surrender herself and Mánna Ján within a quarter of an hour. The time of grace—it was then early morning—passed by, and still the Begam made no sign. Our guns opened with grapeshot, which blew in the palace-gate. The insurgents fled before the advancing Sepoys, leaving some forty dead behind them. The Begam and her nominee were sent off as prisoners to Chunár, and by 10 a.m. of the 8th, the new king, Muhammad Alí, who by strange good luck had remained unhurt in some quiet corner, was installed on the *masnad* and crowned by the Resident's own hands.

An hour before the outbreak which, but for the cool courage of three Englishmen and the timely arrival of the troops, might have ripened into a general massacre, the new king had signed an agreement drawn up by Low, that he would consent to 'any new treaty for the better government of the country that the British Government might think

proper to propose to him.' In accordance with this pledge he signed in September, with manifest reluctance, a treaty which partially set aside Lord Wellesley's treaty of 1801, and under a show of removing past abuses, imposed new burdens upon the revenues of Oudh. It provided for one thing that two regiments of horse, five of foot, with two batteries, organized and disciplined by British officers, should be maintained in Oudh at a yearly charge to that kingdom of sixteen lakhs, or £160,000. This force was never to be employed in 'the ordinary collection of revenue.' It was also stipulated that the management of any district in which gross anarchy, misrule, and oppression might still prevail, should be transferred to British officers for an indefinite period; the surplus receipts, if any, to be regularly paid into the King's Treasury.

This treaty, of which Lord Auckland and his Council were the real framers, proved hardly less distasteful to the Resident than to the King. Some of its main features ran counter to Colonel Low's ideas. The old treaty had serious flaws in it, and the attempt to check misgovernment and to reduce the overgrown armies of the kingdom might seem worthy of all praise. But the Resident saw that matters could not be mended by saddling Oudh with a costly contingent of Sepoys organized on the British model, and commanded by British officers. As a check to misrule, moreover, the new arrangement did not go far enough.

At home the treaty met with small favour. In their despatch of April, 1839, the Court of Directors disallowed it altogether, and ordered the Indian Government to make their decision known without delay to the King. Lord Auckland merely informed the King that he stood released from the burden of paying for the new auxiliary force. But no mention was made of the leading fact that the whole treaty had been set aside. The King and his Ministers were thus led to believe that certain clauses of that treaty were still in force, and could be worked to their own advantage. Lord Auckland's strange suppression of the truth seems to have misled his countrymen in India, and to have escaped the notice of the powers at home. Neither Lord Hardinge in 1847, nor Colonel Sleeman in 1854, knew that the whole treaty had been annulled. It was left for Lord Dalhousie to discover the truth, as confirmed by Low himself, then a member of his Council, and to acquaint the India House with the extent to which Lord Auckland had evaded their commands [1].

In the year 1839 Lord Auckland's attention was called to the misdeeds of an unruly Prince in the highlands of Western India. When the last of the Maráthá Peshwás passed from his throne at Poona into the dignified seclusion of Bithúr, Lord Hastings held out a hand of politic compassion to the long-neglected heir of the house of Sivají, the founder of

[1] Irwin's *Garden of India*; Thornton's *History*; Kaye's *Sepoy War*; Sir C. Jackson's *Vindication of Lord Dalhousie's Administration.*

the Maráthá power. In 1819 the young Rájá of Sátára exchanged the lot of a pensioned captive for that of a sovereign prince, ruling, under British protection, over nearly a million subjects, within an area of 5,000 square miles. The Rájá's powers were carefully defined by a treaty which placed him under the general control of a British Resident. The able historian of the Maráthás, Captain Grant Duff, was appointed to be his tutor. In 1822 he began to govern for himself, and for some few years he gave his English patrons no cause for reasonable complaint. But after a time he fell under the influence of intriguing Bráhmans, ambitious courtiers, discontented barons, and other enemies of British rule. His angry spirit chafed under the shackles of a treaty which denied him all political power, and left him little better, he complained, than 'the manager and farmer of a district.' He came to regard himself as the rightful heir to all the old claims and glories of Maráthá greatness, the destined restorer of Maráthá empire over Hindustán.

While Mountstuart Elphinstone was still Governor of Bombay, he had seen cause to warn the Rájá against placing confidence in '*Vakils* and low intriguing agents;' and had earnestly besought him to discard from his councils the numerous agencies he had set on foot. But the self-willed Prince would listen to no warnings from his English well-wishers. For many years he carried on a correspondence with the Portuguese Government at Goa, in the hope of

winning their armed support for a combined attack on the British Power which had crushed the Maráthá League, and taken to itself the whole of the Peshwá's dominions. For the same purpose he corresponded with his scheming countryman Apa Sáhib, the banished ex-Rájá of Berár, who had taken refuge with the Rájput ruler of Jodhpur. He also made disloyal overtures to the Native officers and men of a Sepoy regiment in Bombay.

These and other vagaries of the Sátára Rájá were reported from time to time to the Bombay Government, whose warnings and remonstrances seem to have made no way against the sinister influence of certain European agents at the Rájá's court. In 1839, the new Governor, Sir James Carnac, an old and capable servant of the Company, resolved to give the royal culprit one last chance for his throne. The proofs of his treason were in Carnac's hands. If the Rájá would only confess his fault and promise to behave better, all should be forgiven him. With Lord Auckland's concurrence, Carnac proceeded in August, 1839, to Sátára. But the Rájá would confess nothing, and rejected the few easy conditions on which he might have made his peace with the paramount power. After three futile interviews and the Rájá's final answer to the Resident, Colonel Ovans, nothing remained for Carnac but to carry out the instructions he had received from Simla. Under a proclamation issued by Lord Auckland, the recalcitrant Rájá was formally deposed and carried off as State prisoner to

Benares, while his brother Sháhjí was enthroned in his stead.

The Government had not yet heard the last of the exiled prince. His English agents, of whom he had several in each of the Presidency towns and even in England, worked the local press busily and perseveringly on his behalf, forwarded petitions, letters, and statements of his supposed wrongs to Leadenhall Street, Cannon Row, and Westminster, and induced some eager politicians to fight their patron's cause in the House of Commons. The Rájá's wrongs and the injustice of the Indian Government were paraded for several years before the British public, and became the text for some indignant oratory both in Parliament and the India House. In 1845 Mr. Hume's motion for a parliamentary inquiry into the ex-Rájá's case was thrown out after brief debate by a majority so crushing, that any further appeal to the Commons would have been impossible, even if the Rájá had not died two years afterwards. There was no use, indeed, in stirring anew a question which, as Sir James Hogg put it, had been decided one way by three successive Governments in Bombay, by Lord Auckland's Government in Calcutta, by the Court of Directors, and by three successive Presidents of the Board of Control[1].

On his way back from Simla, in January, 1840, Lord Auckland spent a few days at Gwalior, exchanging courtesies with the young Mahárájá, Jankoji

[1] Thornton; Hunter's *Imperial Gazetteer*; Allen's *Indian Mail*.

Sindhia, the weak but well-meaning tenant of a throne once filled by Mádhava Ráo. In the days of Mádhava's successor, Daulat Ráo, the power of the Sindhias had been greatly curtailed by the arms and the statesmanship, first of Lord Wellesley, and afterwards of Lord Hastings. On the death of Daulat Ráo in 1827, his widow, the strong-willed Baiza-Bai, adopted the boy Jankoji as his heir, but resolved to keep the government in her own hands as long as she could. It was not until 1833 that the young prince's efforts to shake off her hated thraldom were crowned with full success.

For nine years Jankoji Sindhia did his best to keep the peace among his unruly nobles, and his overgrown army, and to prove his loyalty to the British rule. In return for his concurrence in the remodelling of the Gwalior Contingent, Lord Auckland restored to him in 1837 those districts in Khándesh which had been wrested from Daulat Ráo. He co-operated with his English neighbours in their campaign against Thags and Dakáits. In 1838 he turned back from Gwalior a mission which the ruler of Nepál had sent thither for purposes apparently hostile to the Indian Government. In the following year he arrested an envoy from Dost Muhammad, the able Amír of Kábul, against whom Lord Auckland had already declared war. It needed a stronger hand than his, however, to repress the growth of those internal disorders which, soon after his early death, compelled the armed interference of Lord Auckland's successor.

In another Maráthá State, that of Indore, things were falling into such wild confusion in 1837, that Lord Auckland had to use stern language towards the reigning sovereign, Hari Ráo Holkar. If he did not speedily mend his ways the British Government would have to place his country under the management of their own officers. The threat worked wonders in a comparatively short time. A capable Minister took his place at the helm of State, and in a few months several noteworthy reforms were accomplished. The work of retrenchment went briskly forward; corrupt officers of revenue were weeded out; remissions were granted to those who had suffered from excessive demands; and an improved system of assessment was introduced. Ere long the arrears of pay for the civil and military services were all cleared off. Lord Auckland himself wrote to congratulate Holkar on the happy results which had flowed from his previous warning [1].

With the Muhammadan Nawáb of Karnúl in southern India Lord Auckland's Government had to interfere by force, in 1838, when that half-crazy tyrant filled up the measure of his offences by plotting treason against the British power. His fortified capital was stormed by troops from Madras; and vast quantities of warlike stores were found within the citadel or hidden away in his Zanána. The fugitive Nawáb soon afterwards yielded himself a prisoner,

[1] Malleson's *Historical Sketch of the Native States of India*; Aitchison's *Treaties*.

and was sent off to Trichinopoly, where his life was presently cut short by the knife of a Musalmán fanatic. His dominions were confiscated and his family pensioned off. After the mutiny Karnúl was placed under 'Regulation' Law, as a Collectorate of the Madras Presidency.

In the Nizám's dominions things were going steadily from bad to worse. On the day when Lord W. Bentinck endorsed the claim of the new Nizám to manage his own affairs after his own fashion, the reforms effected or designed by the late Resident, Sir Charles Metcalfe, were doomed to disappear. Our settlement-officers were withdrawn from the districts in which they had been doing good work, and the old system of plunder, jobbery, and extortion was soon in full swing. Our Resident at Haidarábád became powerless to interfere. He could only advise, remonstrate, report to his own Government upon the growing disorders of a rack-rented people, of a country overrun by swarms of mercenaries, Arab, Rohilla, Pathán; and of a Government burdened with ever-accumulating debts and liabilities, which could only be staved off by fresh borrowings from bankers who had nearly come to the end of their own resources. Meanwhile Lord Auckland looked on helpless, if not unheeding; for matters of more pressing moment occupied all his thoughts. What those matters were will be shown in the succeeding chapters.

CHAPTER IV

RUSSOPHOBIA 'IN EXCELSIS'

AMONG the princes, Indian and other, who had sent letters of congratulation to Lord Auckland as the new Governor-General, was the Amír of Kábul, Dost Muhammad Khán, re-founder of the Bárakzái dynasty which still rules over Afghánístán. Dost Muhammad was just then smarting under the failure of his attempt to recover Pesháwar, which Ranjít Singh had wrested from his brother's keeping in 1834, while the Amír himself was fighting his old enemy Sháh Shujá outside Kandahár. Referring in his letter to 'the conduct of reckless and misguided Sikhs, and their breach of treaty,' the Amír begs Lord Auckland to communicate to him 'whatever may suggest itself to your wisdom for the settlement of the affairs of this country, that it may serve as a rule for my guidance.' And he ends with a hope, which was ere long to be literally fulfilled, that 'your Lordship will consider me and my country as your own.'

Lord Auckland's reply was friendly but not encouraging. He avowed his desire that the Afgháns should be 'a flourishing and united nation.' But

with regard to the Amír's grievance against the Sikhs, he said, 'My friend, you are aware that it is not the practice of the British Government to interfere with the affairs of other independent states.' At the same time he hoped shortly to 'depute some gentlemen' to Kábul to discuss commercial matters with the Amír. It seems clear from this that Lord Auckland in 1836 had no prevision of the extent to which in 1839 he would interfere with 'my friend's' affairs. It was equally clear that the project of a commercial mission to a country which had no commerce worth mentioning, which was shut off from India by mountain-ranges guarded by warlike, plunder-loving tribes, was meant to cover some ulterior, though possibly harmless design[1].

It had, in fact, a political object which Lord Auckland did not for the present care to avow. For some years past the steady advance of Russia in Central Asia had caused among our countrymen, both in Europe and the East, a revival of the fears which Buonaparte's ambition had twice aroused in the first years of the nineteenth century. More than once Zemán Sháh, the Afghán grandson of the far-famed Ahmad Sháh, had led his horsemen through the Kháibar towards the plains of Hindustán. One invasion was rolled back by the Sikhs at Lahore, and another was cut short by the advance of a Persian army into Khorásán. Malcolm's successful diplomacy at Ispahan in 1800, and the dethronement of Zemán

[1] *Afghan Papers*, 1839.

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Sháh by his brother Mahmúd, left Anglo-Indian statesmen free from further alarms, until the Peace of Tilsit, concluded between Buonaparte and the Tzar in 1807, once more turned their minds towards the safeguarding of the Indian frontiers. Under the auspices of Lord Minto, then Governor-General, treaties of alliance were made in 1809 with Ranjít Singh, with the Afghán Sháh Shujá at Pesháwar, and with the Sháh of Persia at Teherán.

Hardly had Lord Minto ratified Elphinstone's treaty with Sháh Shujá, in 1810, when that monarch shared the fate of his exiled brother, Zemán Sháh. All fear of danger from French ambition passed away even before Buonaparte's retreat from Moscow. For some years Afghánistán was torn in pieces by intestine wars and plottings among rival chiefs of the Saduzai and Bárakzái clans. Ranjít Singh was adding fresh provinces to the great Sikh kingdom which he himself had founded. The progress of Russian arms towards the Caspian and the Sea of Aral awakened no misgivings in England, among those who remembered how loyally the Tzar had fought for us during the last years of our war with France. Persia was losing province after province to her northern foe, but in spite of former treaties neither the English nor the Indian Government would step forward in her behalf. An excuse for holding back was found in the allegation, which may have been literally true, that Persia had struck the first blow. Little thought was given to the previous provocations. Not until

his death in 1833 arrested the march of his son, Prince Muhammad, against Herát. On his grandfather's death in the following year Prince Muhammad became Sháh, and English influence at Teherán underwent a total eclipse.

Meanwhile Lord W. Bentinck deemed it prudent to cultivate good relations with the Amírs of Sind and to strengthen the old alliance with the powerful Sikh master of the Punjab. In 1830, Alexander Burnes of the Bombay Army was deputed to convey through Sind the horses and other presents which the King of England had sent out to Ranjít Singh. His overt object was to get the Indus opened to British trade; but he was also to look well about him, to learn what he could of Sind politics, to explore the great river of which we then knew little, and try to make friends with the chiefs along its banks. Burnes's mission was highly distasteful to the Sind Amírs, who had no wish to open their country to foreign traders, and distrusted all overtures from a power known to them only for its territorial greed. 'The mischief is done,' said a Biluchi officer, 'the English have seen our country.' After many delays and some fierce repulses, the young envoy was allowed to pursue his voyage up the Indus towards Lahore. Two years later, Colonel Henry Pottinger concluded with the Amírs a treaty which threw the roads and rivers of Sind open to British trade, but expressly forbade the use of them for any military purpose[1].

[1] Hunter's *Gazetteer*; *Afghan Papers*.

On his arrival at Lahore, Burnes received an effusive welcome from the one-eyed Sikh monarch, who loved horses and was careful to cultivate the goodwill of a neighbour whose military prowess he had learned to respect. Ranjít's reception of Lord W. Bentinck at Rúpar, on the upper Sutlej, in October 1831, was a splendid Oriental pageant, which lasted for several days. Before the great camp was broken up, Bentinck had signed a treaty of perpetual friendship with the great Sikh ruler, who agreed in his turn to encourage trade along the Sutlej and upper Indus, and to respect the territories of the Sind Amírs[1].

From Lahore Burnes went on to Simla, where Bentinck gave a ready countenance to his schemes of further exploration. With Bentinck's sanction he started early in 1832 on a difficult and hazardous journey through Peshâwar to Kâbul, and over the Hindu Kush to Bokhâra, returning by way of the Persian Gulf to Bombay. At Calcutta, in 1833, the Governor-General gave him a warm greeting, and sent him to England to lay the results of his travels before the home Government. When his book was published, 'Bokhâra Burnes' became the 'lion' of the season in London drawing-rooms, and the star of learned societies, before he was thirty years old. Returning to India in 1835, he was soon employed on a special mission to Haidarâbâd, the capital of Lower Sind. He had just persuaded the Amírs to sanction a scheme for surveying the Indus, when the new

[1] Cunningham's *History of the Sikhs*; *Afghan Papers*.

Governor-General selected him as leader of that commercial mission to which reference has already been made. Accompanied by Leech of the Bombay Engineers and Wood of the Indian Navy—they were joined later by Dr. Percival Lord—Burnes sailed for Sind from Bombay in November, 1836, to 'work out the policy of opening the river Indus to commerce,' and to keep his eyes open to the political movements in Afghánistán.

Lord Auckland had not been long in India before he began to have vague misgivings as to the maintenance of peace along the Indian frontier. 'Even since I have been here'—he wrote to Metcalfe in September, 1836—'more than one event has occurred, which has led me to think that the period of disturbance is nearer than I had either wished or expected.' The growing restlessness of 'the old man of Lahore,' who still hankered after the 'jungles' and treasures of Sind, the excessive importance attached to the opening of the Indus, the advance of the Persians towards Herát—all this disquieted him much. 'In the meanwhile'—he added—'I have entreated Ranjít Singh to be quiet, and in regard to his two last requests have refused to give him 50,000 muskets, and am ready to send him a doctor and a dentist.'

The idea of a commercial agency at Kábul, when mooted two years before by Burnes himself, had found no favour among men of Indian experience. St. George Tucker, then Chairman at the India House, had condemned it as sure to 'degenerate into a

political agency,' which would ere long involve us in 'all the entanglements of Afghán politics.' Sir Charles Metcalfe, who had always set his face against meddling with the countries beyond the Indus, and who in 1830 had denounced the plan of surveying that river under the guise of a mission to Ranjít Singh, as 'a trick unworthy of our Government,' recorded in a Council Minute his strong objections to the scheme propounded by Captain Burnes. Of the same opinion was Charles Grant, then President of the Board of Control. In 1836, however, changed circumstances favoured the revival of this unpalatable scheme. The new King of Persia, with the countenance of his Russian friends, was preparing for another march upon Herát. It was said that Dost Muhammad and his brethren at Kandahár were corresponding with the Courts of Teherán and Petersburg. In England, Lord Palmerston ruled over the Foreign Office, while the Board of Control was represented by Sir John Hobhouse. In a weak moment Lord Auckland yielded to outside pressure, and Burnes, ambitious, sanguine, rash, and very impulsive, was despatched on his fateful errand to the ruler whose hospitality he had once before enjoyed [1].

Proceeding leisurely through Sind and the Punjab, Burnes rode on safely through the Kháibar, and in September, 1837, he was welcomed into Kábul with 'great pomp and splendour' by the Amír's son Muhammad Akbar Khán. The Mission was comfort-

[1] Kaye's *War in Afghanistan*; Durand's *First Afghan War*.

ably lodged in the palace-fortress of the Bálá Hissár. The Amír himself received his old friend none the less graciously because Burnes, on his way to Kábul, had reproved him for his late attack on our Sikh ally at Jamrúd, near the mouth of the Kháibar. If the English would only help him to recover Pesháwar, Dost Muhammad would agree to almost any terms which Ranjít Singh might offer him. He would even submit to hold that province as a fief of the Punjab, paying the requisite tribute to his infidel overlord.

In the earliest interviews between the Envoy and the Amír, the commercial mission soon dropped out of sight. Talk about politics filled its place. As Burnes himself wrote to a private friend, he had come there not only to 'look after commerce,' but to survey the land, to 'see into affairs and judge of what was to be done hereafter:' and the hereafter, he found, had 'already arrived.' Dost Muhammad, who had early taken his friend's true measure, agreed to almost everything which Burnes recommended. He would do whatever the British Government desired, if the latter would but help him in the matter of Pesháwar. He would eschew all engagements with foreign powers, and would even compel his brothers at Kandahár to give up all connexion with Persia. Rather than see Pesháwar lost altogether to his country, he would consent to a scheme for placing it under the charge of his disloyal brother and bitter foe, Sultán Muhammad Khán.

Looking on the commercial mission as a convenient

mask for political intrigue, the Amír argued that a great power which sought his friendship would be ready to grant him some favour in return. Burnes believed that his latest instructions from Lord Auckland had placed 'a vast latitude' in his hands. He had received many proofs of the Amír's sincerity, and been flattered by the frank and cordial bearing of a prince whom he justly regarded as the foremost Afghán of his day. Burnes saw in Dost Muhammad the 'one strong man in a blatant land,' the ruler whose masterful sway over an unruly people gave sure pledge of his power to guard tho main outworks of our Indian Empire towards the west. So firm was his belief in the Amír's assurances, that he took upon himself to offer the Kandahár chiefs three lakhs of rupees if they would cease from further dealings with the Court of Teherán.

If the forward policy preached at this time from London and Teherán was the only way to counteract Russian intrigues, Lord Auckland's Government ought to have smiled upon their agent's mode of strengthening the Amír's hands against Persia at no great cost to the Indian Treasury. A strong government beyond the Kháibar would have formed an efficient barrier against Russian diplomacy and Persian arms. A little more of the pressure which had just been applied to the 'old man of Lahore,' would have induced him to yield up his costly and troublesome conquest of Pesháwar, if not to the Amír of Kábul, at any rate to the Amír's brother, Sultán Muhammad. Lord

Auckland would thus have secured by peaceful methods all those ends for which, a year later, he rushed into a costly, fruitless, and unrighteous war.

But the Governor-General's mind was being warped by untoward circumstances against the Afghán monarch, who for eleven years had proved in so many ways his right to displace the dynasty of Ahmad Sháh. He was loth to put further pressure on Ranjít Singh, who for his part would have surrendered Peshawar to any one rather than the rightful claimant. Having no settled policy of his own, and being by this time far removed from his Council, Lord Auckland fell under the influence of his two Secretaries, William Macnaghten and John Colvin; both in their own way able men, and both alike bitten by the prevalent Russophobia. Burnes's letters to Macnaghten, the Foreign Secretary, were forwarded from Ludhiána through Captain Claude Wade, the Governor-General's Agent for the Sutlej frontier. Wade was a warm partisan of the dethroned Saduzai prince, Shujá-ul-Mulk, who, after many wanderings and some strange adventures, had found a home under the British flag at the frontier station of Ludhiána, where he drew his monthly pension of 4,000 rupees; brooding over his long-lost throne, the jewels extracted from him by Ranjít Singh, and his own schemes for driving his Bárakzái supplanters out of Kábul and Kandahár. He talked freely to his English visitors about Afghán affairs, and boasted largely of the hold he still retained on the hearts of his former Afghán subjects.

The royal exile's plausible manners and his steady professions of belief in himself and of sympathy with the views of his English protectors, had turned Wade into a zealous advocate of the prince whose character he had failed to gauge aright. Shujá's last attempt to recover his kingdom had been made, with Ranjít's connivance, in the course of 1833. Its utter collapse under the walls of Kandahár in the following year, had been due at least as much to Shujá's cowardice at the crucial moment, as to Dost Muhammad's leadership, or the courage of his troops. It was during the Amír's march towards Kandahár that the wily Sikh ruler gained firm possession of Peshâwar.

Disheartened for a time by Shujá's failure, Wade cast an eye of favour on Dost Muhammad. But Shujá returned to Ludhiána and his influence soon won the British Agent back to his earlier prepossessions. If Wade saw no prospect of restoring Sháh Shujá, he might labour at least for the discouragement of the Sháh's victorious foe. Smitten like Burnes with the prevalent dread of Russia, he refused to see in the strong government of Dost Muhammad the simplest solution of the Central Asian problem. India's safety should rather be found in the disunion of Afghán chiefs and the aggrandizement of Ranjít Singh. Wade's comments on Burnes's letters, which passed regularly through his hands, and on those received from an English traveller, Masson, then staying at Kábul, inclined Lord Auckland more

and more strongly against Burnes's arguments on behalf of the Afghán Amír. Instead of praise for his success in detaching the Kandahár princes from the Persian alliance—the best thing that he could have done—Burnes was seriously censured for exceeding his powers, and required to 'set himself right with the chiefs' in the matter of the proffered subsidy. In a separate letter to Dost Muhammad, the Governor-General counselled him to give up all thought of recovering Pesháwar, to trust in the good offices of the Indian Government, and to make no engagements with other powers without the Governor-General's sanction, on pain of losing the countenance of a Government which had stood between him and Ranjít Singh[1].

These letters were written in January, 1838, from the Governor-General's camp at Bareilly in Rohilkhand. After eighteen months of hard work in Lower Bengal, Lord Auckland, in October, 1837, had left Calcutta and his Council on a tour through the Upper Provinces. The journey was made by water as far as Benares, in a 'flat' or long barge towed by a steamer. From Benares he and his Staff, with his two sisters and a numerous retinue of servants, troops, and camp-followers, marched up the country towards the Himálayas. At Cawnpur, where the famine was already raging, Macnaghten advised him to return to Calcutta, lest the march of so many thousands should aggravate the general distress. Had his advice

[1] Durand; Kaye; *Afghan Papers*.

been followed, and had Lord Auckland rejoined his Council, there might have been no Afghan War[1].

Lord Auckland's letter disappointed and vexed the Afghan Amír, who knew what sort of a barrier stood between him and Ranjít Singh, and who justly resented a threat which implied the right of a distant neighbour to control his foreign policy. The Sikhs might rob him of Pesháwar, but nothing, he knew, would tempt them to face the terrors, real or fabulous, of the Kháibar Pass. And why should a Government which sought his friendship claim the right to curtail his independence? In the last days of 1837, a Russian emissary from Orenburg had arrived at Kábul, bearing letters of compliment from the Tzar and his minister at Teherán. Instead of receiving Captain Viktevitch with open arms, Dost Muhammad treated him from the first with the coldest courtesy, in strict accordance with a promise privately volunteered to the British Agent. The Amír's proposal to ignore Viktevitch altogether was probably sincere; and even after the receipt of the rebuff from Lord Auckland, Dost Muhammad held aloof from his Cossack visitor in the hope of softening the Governor-General's heart. 'He still clung,' says Kaye, 'to the belief that the British Government would look favourably upon his case, and was willing to receive a little from England rather than much from any other State.' Hoping against hope, he caught with readiness at the compromise which Wade himself proposed to urge upon

[1] Miss Eden's *Up the Country*; Marshman.

Ranjít Singh, namely, that Pesháwar should be handed over to the joint keeping of Sultán Muhammad and the Amír.

The Tzar's letter was long but harmless. Stripped of all flourishes, it merely thanked the Amír for his friendly promises to encourage trade between Russian subjects and the people of Kábul, and informed his Highness that 'a man of dignity' was on his way to Kábul, bearing with him certain 'rarities' which the Tzar himself had sent to the Amír. If Viktevitch brought with him any private instructions from Count Simonich at Teherán, the Amír was in no hurry to learn their purport, so long as the British Agent could speak words of comfort into his ear.

By the 21st of February, 1838, Burnes himself began to give up all hope of winning 'the neck-and-neck race,' as he had called it, between Russia and England in Afghánistán. Lord Auckland's latest letters to him and Dost Muhammad declared in the plainest language that compliance with the Amír's demands was quite impossible, that the question of Pesháwar must be left in the hands of Ranjít Singh, 'our firm and ancient ally,' with whom the Amír would find his advantage in making peace. The goodwill and protection of the Indian Government would be assured to the Afghán ruler so long as he placed his foreign policy under British guidance[1].

[1] *Afghan Blue-Book.*

CHAPTER V

THE EVE OF WAR

LORD AUCKLAND'S Ultimatum provoked an outburst of angry merriment in Dost Muhammad's *darbár*. The Amír, said one Sirdár, 'has often written to the British Government about his affairs, and they have answered him by writing about their own.' Another remarked that the Governor-General 'asked much from Dost Muhammad, but granted nothing in return.' Jabar Khán, a brother of the Amír and a well-wisher to the English, said that the latter 'appeared to value their offers at a very high rate, since they expected in return that the Afgháns would desist from all intercourse with Persia, Russia, and Turkistán.' Were the Afgháns, he asked, 'to make all these powers hostile through their adherence to the English, and receive no protection against such enmity in return?' Lord Auckland's offer to restrain the Sikh ruler from attacking the Amír was greeted with general laughter. In point of fact, said Jabar Khán, 'the Mahárájá had never sought to attack Kábul, while hitherto all the aggression had been not on his part, but on that of the Amír.'

These and similar speeches were reported to Macnaghten by the British Agent, who stayed on two months longer at his post, listening with heavy heart to the pleadings and remonstrances of Dost Muhammad's ministers, discussing matters of State with the Amír himself, and fretting at the honours tardily paid to his Russian rival. Ere long Viktevitch rode in state through the streets of Kábul to the Bálá Hissár; the Amír received him with impressive heartiness; and the Captain of Cossacks, who had been sent, like Burnes, on a commercial errand, rose to the occasion by promising the Afghâns everything which they had asked in vain of their English friends. He afterwards went back to Kandahár, and secured the signatures of Dost Muhammad's brethren to the new treaty of alliance with Persia and the Tzar. He had even planned a visit to Lahore; but Ranjít Singh declined to sanction a step so offensive to his English ally [1].

The Amír, however, was not happy. Even as late as March 21 he wrote to the Governor-General, imploring him to 'remedy the grievances of the Afghâns,' and to give them 'a little encouragement and power.' But Lord Auckland returned no answer to this last despairing cry for common justice, and before the end of April Dost Muhammad's patience had worn itself out. One of the Kandahár chiefs came to Kábul to win the Amír over to the Persian alliance; Burnes's Mission had fallen into contempt, and on the 26th of

[1] Kaye.

April Burnes himself set out from Kábul on his way back to India through the Punjab.

The retiring Envoy made one more attempt to win Lord Auckland from the error of those new paths, into which his counsellors were leading him. Early in June, on his way through the Punjab, he expounded in a long letter to Macnaghten his own views of the policy which ought to be adopted if Dost Muhammad was indeed to be thrown over. 'But it remains,' he went on, 'to be reconsidered why we cannot act with Dost Muhammad. He is a man of undoubted ability, and has at heart a high opinion of the British nation, and if half you must do for others were done for him . . . he would abandon Russia and Persia to-morrow.' And he held it to be 'the best of all policy to make Kábul in itself as strong as we can make it, and not weaken it by divided power.' But the last word had already been spoken from Simla. The doom of the Amír was pronounced in Lord Auckland's Minute of the 12th of May, 1838. Of three courses therein specified the Governor-General chose the worst. He would neither leave the Afgháns alone, nor would he grant any assistance to the ruler of Kábul or his brethren at Kandahár; but he would sanction and encourage any movement which our Sikh ally might undertake against Kábul in concert with any force which Sháh Shujá, aided by British officers, might bring into the field.

In his letter from Hasan Abdál, Burnes had drawn a significant contrast between the political aspects of

his day, and those which prompted Lord Wellesley's efforts to counteract the designs of the powerful Afghán ruler, Zemán Sháh. 'We then counteracted them through Persia. We now wish to do it through the Sikhs.' But meanwhile the old Duráni Empire of Ahmad Sháh had gone to pieces, and that of Ranjít had risen to greatness upon its wrecks. While we are doing all we can to keep up the Sikhs as a power east of the Indus, we should also 'consolidate Afghán power west of the Indus, and have a king and not a collection of chiefs;' for another power 'might step in and destroy the chiefships in detail.' But, if the Afgháns were united, we and they could bid defiance to Persia, and we should thus secure 'a steadily progressing influence all along the Indus.' Burnes at any rate had freed himself from the magic of obsolete traditions; but his arguments fell upon ears dazed by the echoes of Persian cannon thundering against the ramparts of Herát. Because certain things had happened to an India torn by intestine quarrels, the wise men at Simla thought that they might be repeated any day against a Government firmly established over a wide dominion, whose base rested on our natural stronghold, the sea, while all the resources of the powerful British nation could be called at need to its support. To let the Persians become masters of Herát seemed to them like throwing open the Gate of India to a power which was making use of Persia as a cat's-paw, in furtherance of the grand scheme of conquest popularly ascribed to Peter the Great.

By this time indeed the growing jealousy of Russian progress eastward, the chatter of diplomatists in both continents, the reports of travellers and roving envoys, the wild gossip of Indian and Afghán bazaars, hashed up in English newspapers and pamphlets, the demand of English trade for new markets,—all conspired with the official despatches received from England to impress Lord Auckland with the need of taking swift precautions against a remote, if not imaginary danger. A year ago he had declared himself resolved 'decidedly to discourage the prosecution by the ex-King Sháh Shujá-ul-Mulk, so long as he may remain under our protection, of further schemes of hostility against the chiefs now in power in Kábul and Kandahár.' Now he spoke of Herát as 'the western frontier of India' from which it was then distant many hundred miles; and prepared to aid Shujá in wresting Kábul and Kandahár from their Bárakzái masters, on the plea that our Saduzai pensioner, as the grandson of Ahmad Sháh, had the best claim to govern a people who had thrice already cast him out. And he proposed that Ranjít Singh should aid Shujá with troops in an enterprise for which the Sikh army had no stomach. General Avitabile, who commanded the garrison at Peshâwar, used to declare that the mere mention of the Kháibar gave his soldiers the colic; and the Afgháns knew that a Sikh advance on Kábul was the last thing they had to fear. Ranjít was a famous warrior, but even his European officers could never make him understand the simple manœuvre

which would carry his veterans through the Kháibar and the Khurd Kábul with little loss of life[1].

It is hard to conceive anything more fatuous than the policy which English statesmen were pursuing towards countries far remote from our Indian frontier. Well might Dost Muhammad's ministers decline to give up all intercourse with outside powers in return for the offer of our protection against a neighbour of whom they had no fear. And good cause had Afghán Sirdárs for laughter at the panic into which brave English gentlemen were thrown by the sound of a Persian march upon Herát, by the presence of a Persian agent at Kandahár, or of a Russian agent at Kábul; as if none but British troops were free to march anywhere, as if friendly intercourse with other than a British government were a crime, and only a British officer might venture to mask a political reconnaissance in the garb of a commercial mission. Persia also had reason to complain of our interference in her quarrel with Herát, as a breach of the treaty which forbade such interference unless both parties agreed in asking for it. The distant phantom of Russian aggression, which had scared our statesmen and diplomatists out of their moral and political wits, was now driving a peace-loving Governor-General into a course of folly and wrong-doing which has few parallels in English history.

In the middle of May Macnaghten set out from Simlá on a special mission to the Court of Ranjít

[1] Kaye; Durand; Marshman; *Afghan Papers*.

Singh, who was then rusticating at Adínanagar, not far from Lahore. On the 31st the Mission were cordially welcomed by their Sikh host, who tottered along the whole length of the room to embrace Macnaghten. A series of conferences ensued in June. The hot winds were blowing fiercely, and in spite of all appliances for coolness, the thermometer in the mud huts erected for the use of the Mission never fell below 102°[1]. Macnaghten offered Ranjít the choice between independent action against the Amír and action in concert with the British Government. The Mahárájá promptly avowed his preference for the latter course. Macnaghten then proposed that the British Government should become a party to the treaty which Ranjít had made with Shujá in 1833, on the eve of Shujá's futile expedition to Kandahár. 'This,' said Ranjít, 'would be adding sugar to milk.' The Mission presently followed him to Lahore, where, after long haggling and sudden hesitations, the weary old monarch signed, on the 26th of June, a treaty of close alliance with Sháh Shujá and the British Government, for the purpose of driving the Bárakzái princes out of Kábul and Kandahár.

From Lahore Macnaghten hurried back to Ludhiána, where Sháh Shujá was soon persuaded to add his signature to a compact which, as explained and interpreted by the English Envoy, promised to replace him on the throne of his blind old brother and fellow-exile, the once-dreaded Zemán Sháh. Him, too, Macnaghten

[1] Miss Eden's *Up the Country*.

visited; and great was the old man's delight 'at the prospect of being permitted to revisit the land of his ancestors.' On the 17th of July Macnaghten's party set off for Simla, where the treaty was presently ratified by the Governor-General.

This Tripartite Treaty was in fact a revised and enlarged edition of the treaty of 1833. The cardinal difference between the two lay in the coming forward of the British Government to guarantee the due fulfilment of the pledges previously exchanged between Sháh Shujá and Ranjít Singh. The Governor-General bound himself to be thenceforth 'the friend of their friends and the enemy of their enemies.' Ranjít's scruples about signing the treaty had been overcome, partly by the knowledge that all his conquests from the Afgháns, including Kashmír and Pesháwar, would now be guaranteed to him and his heirs by a power on whose good faith and armed strength he could rely; and partly by a threat pretty plainly hinted, that his English friends might carry out their purpose without his aid. As for Shujá, who had stood at first upon his dignity, and wanted only British money and the loan of a few officers to drill his troops, his hesitation was speedily removed by the Envoy's assurances on both these points. Not a word was mentioned in the treaty about any scheme for helping our allies with a contingent of British troops, for Lord Auckland's folly had not yet soared so high. But one article of the treaty condemned the Amírs of Sind to pay Sháh Shujá a large sum of money in quittance

of all claims for arrears of tribute from the whilom vassals of an Afghán king. Seeing that Sind had long since cast off the yoke of Kábul, while Shujá himself, in 1834, had solemnly renounced, through releases written in copies of the Kurán, all further claims on Sind, this sudden revival of an extinct demand did not commend itself to the Amírs as evidence of English honour or goodwill [1].

The triple alliance against a ruler whose proffered friendship we had deliberately spurned, whose right to govern his Afghán subjects had been proved by every incident of his wise, just, and vigorous rule, marked the first stage in a course of high-handed robbery, pursued under pretexts transparently false. The full extent of our folly and wrong-doing was destined for some years to be veiled from English eyes by the Afghán Blue-Book of 1839, which confused white with black by a process of skilful garbling, afterwards exposed by the eloquent historian of the Afghán War. Out of Burnes's own letters the compilers of that remarkable fiction contrived to show that the Amír of Kábul and his kinsmen of Kandahár had behaved as eager and determined foes to the British power. Every word of Burnes's writing which so much as hinted at Dost Muhammad's desire to compromise his quarrel with Ranjít Singh, or to exchange the friendship of Persia for that of England; every reason that Burnes put forward for trusting in Dost Muhammad, and for counteracting Persia by

[1] Kaye; Cunningham; Thornton.

strengthening the Amír, was carefully weeded out of the published papers. A few words, a sentence, a whole string of sentences would be omitted, without leaving a single trace of the consequent gaps. Of the letter which Burnes wrote from Hasan Abdál on the Amír's behalf, not a word appeared in print. Some even of Lord Auckland's letters were treated in the same fashion. The twenty-four paragraphs of the despatch rebuking Burnes for unauthorized dealings with the Kandahár chiefs were melted down to three. Of Lord Auckland's letter of instructions to Macnaghten, nothing was left but the magniloquent passage in which he set forth his pacific yearnings and extolled the power of the British Government.

Regarded as a work of art, the Blue-Book was an undoubted success. The *callidae juncturae* had been done to perfection. As a justification of Lord Auckland's policy it baffled criticism for many years. To its moral shortcomings, however, no words of condemnation would be too strong. In a published volume of State papers nobody expects to find the whole truth about any political question. Diplomacy too often means duplicity. But in this instance official lying went beyond all conventional bounds. The dishonesty—to use Kaye's own words—'by which lie upon lie is palmed upon the world, has not one redeeming feature . . . The character of Dost Muhammad has been lied away; the character of Burnes has been lied away . . . Both have been set forth as doing what they did not, and omitting to do what they did.'

On Macnaghten's arrival at Simla he found Lord Auckland already prepared to help his allies with something stronger than British officers and rupees. Under the pressure applied from Cannon Row and enforced by the arguments of his two private secretaries, the solid John Colvin and the brilliant Henry Torrens, the Governor-General had made up his uncertain mind to support Sháh Shujá with an army strong enough not only to eject the Bárakzái princes, but to relieve, or, if need were, to recover Herát, which Muhammad Sháh had been besieging ever since the past November.

The Afghán province of Herát was then ruled by the Saduzai prince, Sháh Kámrán, whose father Sháh Mahmúd had once held and lost the throne of Kábul. Kámrán had incurred the wrath of his overlord, the Sháh of Persia, by making inroads into Persian territory, kidnapping thousands of Persian subjects, and selling them into slavery. McNeill, himself, our Envoy at Teherán, admitted the justice of the Sháh's quarrel with Herát, even while he called upon his own Government to take steps against a movement which could only serve to extend Russian influence by means of Persian arms to the very threshold of India. Muhammad Sháh, however, was bent on punishing his refractory vassal, and Count Simonich, the Russian Minister, encouraged him to pursue an enterprise which, whether it failed or prospered, might redound to Russia's advantage.

On the 23rd of November, 1837, the Persian batteries

The great assault of the 24th of June was delivered at five different points, from four of which the assailants were repulsed with comparative ease. The fifth was all but carried, when Pottinger dragged the Wazír Yár Muhammad to the scene of danger. The Afghán, who was no coward, rushed among his flying soldiers, and with blows and menaces drove them back to the breach. For the third and last time the assailants were beaten back with heavy slaughter, and the siege thenceforth was turned into a blockade, in the course of which both the garrison and their besiegers suffered greatly from lack of food. Within Herát the sufferings of the people were intensified by the extortions of Yár Muhammad and the plundering practices of his ill-paid troops. Meanwhile some hundreds of Bombay Sepoys had been landed at Karák, an island in the Persian Gulf, before the end of June, 'with a view to the maintenance of our interests in Persia.' A squadron of the Indian Navy lay off the island. Had this movement been ordered a twelvemonth earlier, it is probable that the Sháh would have refrained from attacking Herát. As it was, the small demonstration was magnified by rumour into the advance of a large fleet and army for the purpose of making war upon the Sháh. In the wake of this rumour McNeill sent Colonel Stoddart to the Persian camp with a message which the Sháh could not misunderstand. 'The fact is,' said the King to Stoddart, 'if I don't leave Herát, there will be war?' 'All depends upon your Majesty's answer,' was Stoddart's reply. Two days later

Muhammad Sháh informed Stoddart of his intention to comply with the demands of a Government whose friendship he still desired.. He was weary in fact of an enterprise which had cost him much money and a great many lives. After some weeks spent in preparations for a timely retreat, the siege was raised on the 9th of September; Pottinger became the hero of the hour; and McNeill returned in triumph from Bághdád to Teherán.

NOTE TO CHAPTER V.

In 1842 and 1843, two motions touching the garbled despatches were rejected by the House of Commons, mainly upon Sir J. Hobhouse's assurance that there had been no garbling. In 1858, another motion resulted in the issue of an amended Blue-Book, edited by Sir John Kaye, which more than justified every word of his indictment on that subject. On the 19th of March, 1861, Mr. Dunlop moved for a Committee of Inquiry in a long, able, and temperate speech, to which no valid reply was possible. The debate that followed was remarkable, chiefly for Lord Palmerston's angry disparagement of 'Lieutenant Burnes,' and for Bright's indignant demand to know 'who did it.' In the end the motion was rejected by 159 votes to 49. *Hansard*, 3rd Series, Vol. 162.

CHAPTER VI

'THE MILITARY PROMENADE'

THE retreat of the Persians from Herát, with the consequent failure of Russia's supposed designs against what our statesmen were pleased to call the Western Frontier of India, seemed to leave Lord Auckland without a pretext for sending a British army into Afghánistán. There was nothing more to fear for the present from Russian aggressiveness masked by Persian arms. Our secret enemies inside India ceased to foster vague hopes of a speedy deliverance from British rule. The Russian Government protested that Count Simonich had acted contrary to his instructions, and Viktevitch was afterwards received at Petersburg so coldly that he blew out his brains. It seemed so easy to draw back betimes from a foolhardy enterprise to which nothing in the Tripartite Treaty had directly committed us; which Shujá himself regarded with keen disfavour; and towards which no solid help could be expected from our Sikh ally, who would never think of allowing a British army to march across the Punjab. But Lord Auckland felt that the time for drawing back was past. Some weeks before the safety of Herát became officially known to him, he

had issued his Simla Manifesto of the 1st of October, which set forth his reasons for despatching an army across the Indus to secure our western frontier from attack and to succour the garrison of Herát. The troops designed for that purpose were already marching towards the Sutlej at Firozpur, while other troops were assembling at Bombay. Early in November Lord Auckland knew that the main object of his warlike preparations was already attained.

His mind, however, had been so deeply prejudiced against the Bárakzái princes, so fatally imbued with the poison of Russophobia, that he could not bring himself to abandon altogether the scheme of 'national defence' set forth in the Simla Manifesto. In that remarkable document Dost Muhammad was charged with making 'a sudden and unprovoked attack' upon our ancient ally Ranjít Singh; with 'urging the most unreasonable pretensions' to Pesháwar; with forming schemes of 'aggrandizement and ambition injurious to the security and peace of the frontiers of India'—as if Pesháwar were then our frontier—and with giving 'his undisguised support to the Persian designs in Afghánistán,' in utter disregard of the views and interests of the British Government. The Persian attack on Herát was 'a most unjustifiable and cruel aggression,' to which the Kandahár princes openly lent their aid. As the Bárakzái Sirdárs were 'ill fitted under any circumstances to aid us in our just and necessary measures of national defence,' the Governor-General had determined to

espouse the cause of Sháh Shujá, whose popularity in his own country had been clearly proved, and whose power would now be supported 'against foreign interference and factious opposition by a British army.' In accordance with the Tripartite Treaty the integrity of Herát and the independence of the Sind Amírs would be duly guaranteed. As soon as Sháh Shujá 'shall be secured in power, and the independence and integrity of Afghánistán established, the British army will be withdrawn.'

The spirit of truth had little part in the framing of a manifesto which began by stating that Lord Auckland had, 'with the concurrence of the Supreme Council,' ordered the assembling of a British force for service across the Indus. In point of fact the Council had just sent home a formal protest against a measure on which their opinions had never been recorded. Dost Muhammad's 'unprovoked attack upon our ancient ally' may be compared for truthfulness with the wolf's complaint in the fable against the lamb. The accusation must have greatly tickled the bibulous old warrior who had crowned his former winnings from the Afgháns by stealing Pesháwar while the Amír was fighting for his throne at Kandahár. It was British policy which drove the Amír of Kábul to seek elsewhere the help denied him by the Governor-General. The Sháh of Persia had just cause for attacking Herát. Had he succeeded, that city would have been handed over to the Kandahár chiefs, who were ready to hold it for their Bárakzái

brother at Kábul. Sháh Shujá's popularity existed mainly in his own assurances and the sanguine prophecies of credulous partisans.

Such were the salient features of a State paper in which—to quote from Sir Herbert Edwardes—'the views and conduct of Dost Muhammad Khán were misrepresented with a hardihood which a Russian statesman might have envied[1].' The defence of our 'western frontier' and the libels on Dost Muhammad were mixed together so ingeniously, that it seemed as if the proposed campaign were directed rather to the restoration of Shujá than to the deliverance of Herát. It was easy therefore, when its apparent purpose had been forestalled by the Persian retreat, to fall back upon its real purpose, the overthrow of Bárakzái rule in Afghánistán. From his own point of view Lord Auckland may have deemed himself bound in honour as well as policy to secure at all hazards the one great end for which the Tripartite Treaty had been designed. If breaches of treaty on behalf of 'the national defence' did not greatly trouble him, he was still like Brutus, 'an honourable man,' ready to keep faith with his latest allies, the ruler of Lahore and the Ludhiána pensioner. And he knew that without the aid of a British army, the re-seating of Shujá on the throne of his ancestors was more than doubtful. Hence, no doubt, it happened that the General Order of November 8, which announced the safety of Herát and sang the well-earned praises

[1] *Life of Sir Henry Lawrence*, vol. i.

of Lieutenant Pottinger, informed the world that the intended expedition would still be carried out with a view to the establishment of a friendly power in Eastern Afghánistán, and of 'a permanent barrier against schemes of aggression upon our north-west frontier[1].'

All through September and October regiments and batteries had been marching up from their several stations towards the sandy, treeless plains around Firozpur, while a column of Bombay troops was mustering for a voyage to the coast of Sind. After twelve years of general peace the prospect of a campaign in unknown regions beyond the Indus was hailed with eagerness by troops and officers alike, as a welcome change from the uneventful round of life in cantonments. To most of them it mattered little with whom they might be going to war, so long as campaigning released them from daily drills or office drudgery, to say nothing of the consequent chances of honours, promotion, prize-money, and extra pay. Before the close of November, 1838, the Army of the Indus, 14,000 strong, with about 6,000 of Shujá's levies officered by Englishmen, had assembled at Firozpur, under the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Henry Fane. But that fine old soldier, who had planned all the arrangements for the larger enterprise designed by the Simla Manifesto, cared no longer to command the smaller army destined only for the support of Sháh Shujá. Ill health and other causes decided him

[1] *Afghan Papers.*

to resign his command as soon as the Army of the Indus began its march. Of the troops assembled under his orders, one column, about 9,500 strong, was told off by lot for active service under the command of Sir Willoughby Cotton, while the remainder were to be held in reserve at Ludhiána and Firozpur. The Bombay column, 5,600 strong, was to be commanded by Sir John Keane, who would take command of the whole force as soon as the two divisions came together. The Sháh's contingent was to march independently through Sind, keeping touch with the Bengal division. Under the escort of a Sikh contingent Prince Timúr, a son of Sháh Shujá, accompanied by Colonel Wade, was to march up to Kábul by way of Pesháwar and the Kháibar Pass.

Out of deference to the feelings of our 'ancient ally,' the Bengal troops were to make their way down the Sutlej valley through Bháwalpur, and along the left bank of the Indus to Rohri, where they would probably be joined by the Bombay column. After the passage of that river they would turn north-westward by Shikárpur across the Sind Desert to Dádar and the long Bolán Pass which would bring them out into the Shál valley. From Quetta the whole army would march on over the hills which divide Khelát from Kandahár. The route thus outlined was twice as long and at least as difficult as the straight road to Kábul through the Punjab. But Shujá with his motley force had passed over it in 1834; and what he had done with limited means a British army well

equipped and backed by all the resources of a strong government, might surely be trusted to accomplish in a manner not prescribed by the rules of war.

A ceremonial meeting at Firozpur between Lord Auckland and the feeble old Lion of the Punjab served as a grand spectacular prelude to the serious business on which the former had embarked. On the 29th of November, amidst the roar of guns and the clash of martial music, the elephant which bore Ranjít Singh shuffled through the red lines of British infantry towards the great Darbár tent, whence the Governor-General rode forth on his own elephant to welcome his royal guest. The two lines of elephants bearing the chief officers and privileged friends of the two leaders crushed together with a clash—says Miss Eden—'that was very destructive to the howdahs and hangings;' while Lord Auckland himself transferred what looked like a bundle of crimson cloth from Ranjít's howdah into his own. The two rode on together to the Darbár tent, followed by a many-coloured crowd of Sikh and English officers. There was soon an excited rush of eager spectators into the great tent where Ranjít rested for a few minutes, looking 'exactly like an old mouse with grey whiskers and one eye[1].' He was then led into a small inner tent reserved for private interviews. But the English officers, who 'were just like so many bears,' pushed the sentries aside, and heedless of aides-de-camp, soon filled the inner room also.

[1] *Up the Country.*

Ranjít himself 'had no jewels on whatever, nothing but the commonest red silk dress.' The old man was highly pleased with his presents, especially with a portrait of the Queen, painted by Miss Eden, which he promised to hang up before his tent with all the honours of a royal salute. 'He ran out in the sun,' says Miss Eden, 'to feel the legs of one of the horses sent for his acceptance.' Next day the Governor-General crossed the river to return the Mahárájá's visit. Amidst a scene of rare Oriental splendour, in which the Sikhs, according to an eye-witness, 'shone down the English,' Ranjít received his guest to the music of our national anthem as played by a Sikh band. After some friendly talk through interpreters, Lord Auckland and his Staff were entertained with a frolicsome *nautch* and the capers of male buffoons. At the evening banquet, Ranjít Singh got royally drunk on his favourite liquor, whose undiluted strength might have been too much for Quilp himself, and a very few drops of which burned Miss Eden's lips[1].

These state-pageants were followed up in the first days of December by a round of military parades, and festive amenities of all kinds. One day Sir Henry Fane manœuvred the whole of his force in a style which delighted the old Sikh warrior, who seemed to grow young again as he rode his horse on the scene of mimic war. His own Khálsa troops were paraded in their turn under some of his best Sirdárs, and the English officers were surprised to find how smartly

[1] Kaye; *Up the Country.*

they did their work. On the 10th of December, Cotton's division began its march down the left bank of the Sutlej, encumbered by a train of 30,000 camels and 38,000 camp-followers. The road selected for its march to Kábul passed through more than a thousand miles of parched plains and rugged mountains, peopled either by lawless tribes or by communities ill affected to our rule. The military objections to such a movement were to be refuted by its success, but the policy which inspired it had few friends at home outside the Ministry and the Board of Control. The Duke of Wellington held that 'the consequence of crossing the Indus once to settle a government in Afghánistán will be a perennial march into that country.' Lord William Bentinck declared that Auckland and Macnaghten were the last men in the world whom he would have suspected of such folly.

Lord Wellesley laughed at the very notion of occupying a land of 'rocks, sands, deserts, ice, and snow.' Metcalfe, who had always opposed the measures taken for opening the Indus to our trade, held 'that the surest way to bring Russia down upon ourselves is for us to cross the Indus, and meddle with the countries beyond it.' Mountstuart Elphinstone, writing to Burnes, allowed that an army of proper strength might take Kandahár and Kábul, and set up Shujá, 'but for maintaining him in a poor, cold, strong, and remote country among a turbulent people like the Afgháns, I own it seems to me to be hopeless.' Like Lord Lawrence forty years later, he contended that

held his ground so masterfully against all assailants for so many years. Sir Henry Fane himself, writing to Metcalfe in 1837, had contended that any advance made northward beyond the Sutlej could only add to our military weakness. 'If you want your empire to expand'—he wrote—'expand it over Oudh or over Gwalior, and the remains of the Maráthá empire. Make yourselves complete sovereigns of all within your bounds. *But let alone the far West.*' Many an officer wished with Vincent Eyre that he was about to draw his sword in a better cause, and Sir John Kaye had fair grounds for believing that Lord Auckland's policy had 'very few genuine supporters' among the Anglo-Indian journals of that day [1].

Viewed, indeed, in whatever aspect, that policy was at once a blunder and a crime. Sháh Shujá had repeatedly declared his unwillingness to re-enter Kábul as a king who owed his crown to British bayonets and British guns. Our concord with the Sikhs depended on the will of a 'drunken old profligate,' as Miss Eden called him, whose death might be expected at any moment. The march of our troops through Sind involved the need of forcing the rulers of that country, in the teeth of existing treaties, to expedite the passage of those troops with a due provision of carriage and supplies. The Army of the Indus would have to depend during its march partly on its own supplies, partly on such help as the rulers of the countries traversed might be induced to afford. For the latter purpose it

[1] Kaye.

soon became needful to employ the methods commonly adopted by the strong against the weak. Along the line of march our political agents were carrying out with a high hand the coercive measures entrusted to their charge. Even the friendly Nawáb of Bháwalpur, a little state bordering the Sutlej and the Indus, was bullied and lectured into furnishing the requisite supplies, while Burnes was engaged in teaching the Amírs of Khairpur in Upper Sind a lesson of prompt obedience to the demands of their new allies.

Towards the princes and people of Sind yet stronger measures had to be applied. It was no time to stand upon vulgar scruples, to respect either the prejudices of Native rulers or the faith of treaties which the needs of the moment had rendered obsolete. Colonel Henry Pottinger, the Resident at Haidarábád, was bidden by Lord Auckland to inform the Sind Amírs that the article in the treaty of 1832, which forbade our using the Indus for the conveyance of military stores, 'must necessarily be suspended during the course of operations undertaken for the permanent establishment of security to all those who are a party to the treaty.' The Amírs were threatened with the loss of their independence and even of their rule, in the event of resistance to our 'just and necessary' demands, or of any further intrigue with the Sháh of Persia. Pottinger himself, who had seen nothing serious in the civilities lately exchanged between Teherán and Haidarábád, and who had his own scruples about breaking faith on doubtful pretexts,

contrived to soften the tenour of instructions which bade him warn the Amírs that 'neither the ready power to crush and annihilate them, nor the will to call it into action was wanting, if it appeared requisite, however remotely, for the safety of the Anglo-Indian Empire or frontier [1].'

Early in December the Bombay portion of the Army of the Indus was encamped at Vikkar, on the coast of Sind, unable to move forward for want of carriage and supplies. It seemed to Keane as if he had landed in an enemy's country. The little help he could obtain in the way of carriage came chiefly from Kachhí, for the boatmen and camel-owners of Sind would have no dealings with him, while the Amírs' Biluchi soldiery were gathering round their capital of Haidarábád. At last, on the 24th, he began his march up the right bank of the Indus to Tatta, once a great and populous city, noted for the produce of its silk and cotton looms. Some of his troops were quartered in a house which, eighty years earlier, had formed part of an English factory long since deserted. At Tatta Keane halted, waiting within easy reach of the capital for further guidance from Pottinger, and for the reinforcements already ordered from Bombay [2].

In the last days of December, while Cotton's troops were still beyond the Sind frontier, Sir Alexander Burnes—for he had just been knighted—alarmed Mír Rustam, the aged head of the Khairpur chiefs in Upper

[1] *Afghan Papers.*

[2] Kaye; Durand; Hunter's *Gazetteer.*

Sind, into signing a treaty which made the English temporary masters of Bakhar, the island-fortress which guarded the Indus where it rushed down between the opposite towns of Sakhar and Rohri. The poor old man also agreed to pay his share of the twenty-seven lakhs—£270,000—which Sháh Shujá and Ranjít Singh were to divide between them in quittance of all claims on the Sind Amírs. The news of this arrangement did not improve the temper of the Haidarábád princes, who saw no end to the spoliations of which they were the destined victims. It was feared that their wrath might explode at any moment, and the march to Kandahár be thus indefinitely delayed.

But by the middle of January, 1839, the Bengal column had crossed the frontier of Upper Sind, not without some loss of camels and camp-followers. Ten days later it was encamped at Rohri, prepared in due time to cross the river and march on towards Shikárpur, where Shujá's force was awaiting its advent. On the 29th the British flag waved over the fort of Bakhar. By that time Keane had moved on to Jarakh, two marches only from the capital of Lower Sind. His troops were quite ready for the struggle which seemed impending.

But the expected was not to happen. On the 27th Cotton had received his orders to march with the bulk of his troops towards Haidarábád. On the 30th the march began, while a brigade of Shujá's force moved down the right bank of the river towards Larkhána.

Aware of these movements, the Amírs reopened negotiations with Pottinger, who had now the game in his own hands. On the 1st of February they yielded at discretion, even to his revived demand for tribute to Sháh Shujá. Keane now crossed the Indus and marched up the left bank to Kotri, opposite Haidarábád.

By that time the reserve brigade from Bombay had landed at Karáchi. As the squadron conveying the troops drew near the harbour, a shot from the fort on Manora Point was answered by a broadside from the *Wellesley* man-of-war. Within an hour her guns had battered down the southern face of the fort, and the 40th Foot were soon inside the place. Pottinger told the Amírs that a shake of their lips would bring upon Haidarábád the same fate which had befallen Karáchi. But the Amírs were already cowed. On the 6th of February they signed the treaty which bound them not only to pay their share of the tribute-money—20 lakhs—but also three lakhs a year towards the maintenance of a British garrison in Sind. Meanwhile Cotton was marching back with all speed to Rohri, where a strong bridge of boats secured for his troops and guns an easy passage across both branches of the broad and rapid stream. On the 15th of February the Bengal column, leaving one regiment to garrison Bakhar, was in full march from Sakhar to Shikárpur. By that time Keane also had quitted Kotri on his way towards the same goal [1].

[1] Kaye; Durand; Thornton.

Thus far, in spite of obvious blunders, Fortune had favoured the progress of our arms. The Amírs had missed their opportunity of overwhelming Keane long before Cotton's troops could have come within striking distance, or any help have reached him from Bombay. The game of coercion had been played against them with entire success amidst circumstances which seemed to make for its inevitable failure. The whole business had been managed in a curiously haphazard way, under a Governor-General who sent conflicting or uncertain orders, by military leaders acting without concert, and political officers whose apparent functions clashed as much as their personal views. It was fortunate for us that Fane accompanied the Bengal column into Sind, and that Pottinger, not Burnes or Macnaghten, represented his Government at Haidarábád. But for Pottinger's discreet forbearance, Fane's cool judgement, and Keane's self-reliant courage, affairs might, as Sir Henry Durand remarks, 'have been very seriously compromised by the jarrings of triplicate envoys and triplicate commanders, and the want of concert amongst the isolated columns of the latter.'

By the 20th of February the whole of Cotton's force was encamped at Shikárpur, much to the relief of Macnaghten, who, as Envoy and Minister to Sháh Shujá, had ill brooked the delays occasioned by the need of coercing the Sind Amírs. Burnes also was in camp as Envoy to the Khán of Khelát. Including Shujá's contingent, more than 15,000 troops of all

arms were awaiting the order to march forward, when unpleasant news from Herát and the Bolán hills decided Macnaghten to urge upon Cotton the need of hurrying on towards Dádar without a reference to Sir John Keane. On the 22nd the march began. During Shujá's long halt at Shikárpur no attempt had been made to store up supplies anywhere along a route of 170 miles, more than half of which crossed a virtual desert, sparsely dotted by villages, nearly waterless, and yielding little forage even of the poorest kind. Some twenty-six miles of the route lay through an absolute desert called the Pát. The heat was fearful, the water hardly drinkable, and bands of Biluchi robbers swooped down upon the long train of baggage animals, carrying off much plunder without fear of hindrance or pursuit. By the 10th of March Cotton found himself at Dádar with an army weakened by sickness, worn with long marching, and crippled by its heavy losses in camels. horses, and camp-followers.

After five days' rest the troops began their toilsome ascent of the stony gorges of the Bolán Pass, which wound for sixty miles through the rugged mountain-barrier that divides the plains of Sind from the highlands of Biluchistán. Hundreds of camels fell dead or death-stricken during the seven days that passed before the troops emerged from the Bolán into the welcome verdure of the Shál Valley. Biluchi marauders continually harassed the rear brigade, and lost no opportunity of plundering the baggage. On the 26th Cotton's force was encamped outside Quetta, at the

northern end of the Shál Valley, 'a most miserable mud town'—says Havelock—'with a small castle on a mound,' which held 'one small gun on a rickety carriage.' Here, at a height of 5,000 feet above the sea, our weary half-starved soldiers had to wait for orders from Keane, who had not yet reached Dádar; while Burnes was trying to squeeze impossible supplies out of the bewildered ruler of Khelát. Robbed of their blankets and reduced to half-rations, the troops were now suffering as much from cold, with a temperature ranging from 30° to 60°, as they had lately suffered from the fierce heat[1].

On the 6th of April Keane himself arriving at Quetta some days in advance of the Bombay column, took over the chief command of the force there assembled. With a total loss of 20,000 camels, many horses and bullocks, a great deal of baggage and many hundred camp-followers, the Army of the Indus found itself ill prepared for the real business of a campaign which Auckland's secretaries had talked of as a military promenade. The country around was gay with fruit-trees in full bloom, but the scant supplies of food in the Shál Valley were nearly exhausted, and the Khán of Khelát, whose domains yielded very little grain and only a few thousand sheep, could not fill up the void in our commissariat stores. Nothing remained for Keane but to push on at all risks over the Khojak towards Kandahár. There was no time to lose, if a

[1] Kaye; Durand; Colonel Innes's *History of the Bengal European Regiment*.

catastrophe was to be averted; for the camp-followers drew only quarter rations; men and animals alike grew daily weaker, and some food must be left behind for the Bombay column, then struggling through the Bolán Pass.

CHAPTER VII

THE RESTORATION OF SHÁH SHUJÁ

ON the 7th of April Keane marched from Quetta towards Háikalzai, beyond which rose the Khojak in a tumbled sea of bare, bleak, rugged slate-hills, cloven by passes shorter but more formidable than the Bolán. No attempt to reconnoitre the ground had been made during the ten days' halt at Quetta. It was not certain that the pass selected was the most practicable. The passage of the Khojak was slow, difficult, and full of hardship for our ill-fed troops. After the engineers had made or mended some kind of road, the guns and ordnance wagons had to be dragged by our European soldiers up the slopes, sometimes through gorges where two loaded camels could not pass abreast. It took many days and much hard labour to carry the force with all its incumbrances over the Khojak into the plains of Kandahár. Happily no enemy, except stray groups of plundering Afgháns and Biluchis, harassed Keane's advance; but the loss of baggage, tents, beasts, and warlike stores, was very great. In one march alone the cavalry brigade lost fifty-eight horses, dead of sheer exhaustion; and both

men and horses were worn out with hunger, thirst, and fatigue, when on the 26th of April the main body encamped with Keane before the city of Kandahár[1].

On the previous day Sháh Shujá had made his public entry into the city where lay entombed the remains of his famous grandfather, Ahmad Sháh. Dost Muhammad's three brothers had lost heart, and fled without striking one blow. The Saduzai prince, according to Macnaghten, 'was received with feelings nearly amounting to adoration.' Something must be allowed for the Envoy's obstinate belief in Shujá's popularity, a belief shared by few of Keane's officers; for the winning influence of British gold, for the impulsion of mere curiosity, and for Afghán readiness to worship the rising sun. On the 8th of May, a few days after the arrival of the Bombay column, a grand parade of our troops outside the city was got up in honour of the royal exile whom British bayonets had brought back in triumph to the capital of Western Afghánistán. As the Sháh ascended the raised platform whence he and his retainers were to witness the review, the long line of troops presented arms, and the batteries thundered a salute of 101 guns. Seated under a gorgeous canopy, and surrounded by British officers, the new king might enjoy the spectacle of guns and regiments marching past. But people noted that barely a hundred Afgháns came out of the city to take part in the ceremony of installing their long

[1] Kaye; Durand; Sir G. Lawrence's *Forty-three Years in India.*

lost king. In Macnaghten's programme a large space had been set apart for 'the populace restrained by the Sháh's troops.' But the space seemed almost empty, nor did any Afghán of known repute come forward to pay his reverence to the popular idol of Macnaghten's fancy.

The army encamped before Kandahár was in sore need of rest and refreshment alike for man and beast. It took time to replenish the commissariat stores and to repair the loss of camels, horses, and bullocks in the long march from Firozpur. The monotony of camp-life under a burning sun was broken now and then by rambles through the city bazaars, by ceremonious visits to the Sháh, by the murder of an officer who had strayed too far from camp, by the arrival of a large convoy of grain from the southward, by the presence of a mission from Herát, by the despatch of a small force westward in pursuit of the fugitive Sirdárs. Colonel Sale's detachment crossed the Helmand river to Girishk in the middle of May, to find only an empty fort; for the Kandahár chiefs, who had refused Macnaghten's invitation to surrender, had fled from Girishk towards the Persian frontier. Before Keane's army was ready to move forward, fever and dysentery had filled the hospitals and taken heavy toll of human life.

Meanwhile Macnaghten was preparing to make a suitable return to the overtures received from Sháh Kámrán and his villainous Wazír, whose open insults in the previous January had driven Eldred Pottinger

out of Herát. After some futile intrigues with Persia, the two rogues now paid their court to Sháh Shujá and his English patrons. In the middle of June Macnaghten despatched a friendly mission to Herát, for the purpose of bribing Kámrán into closer union with the British power. Its leader, Major D'Arcy Todd of the Bengal Artillery, carried with him two lakhs of rupees and a battery of guns for Kámrán's special behoof. The officers of the Mission were to aid Yár Muhammad in repairing and strengthening the defences of Herát. English money, in fact, was showered about for a time in all directions; but when Macnaghten found his treasury running dry, not a banker at Kandahár would help him with a temporary loan[1].

Of Dost Muhammad's movements nothing was known for certain, except that he had sent a force under his favourite son, Muhammad Akbar Khán, towards Jalálábád, to hinder the advance of Prince Timúr and his Sikh contingent upon Kábul. Another of his sons, Haidar Khán, was sent off with 3,000 Afgháns to hold the ancient fortress of Ghazní; while the Amír himself was trying to collect an army for the defence of his own capital. The long halt at Kandahár seems to have puzzled him as to Keane's ulterior purpose. If Keane was preparing to march upon Herát, Kábul would be safe for that year. He was still unaware that the march upon Herát had been laid aside. Keane, on the other hand, trusted to Macnaghten for the information which he ought to

[1] Kaye; Durand.

have gathered for himself. No scouting parties were sent out in any direction. The sanguine Envoy was ready to stake his credit that not a shot would be fired in opposition to Sháh Shujá's march on Kábul. But for the timely remonstrances of Major Thompson, the Chief Engineer, he would have persuaded Keane to leave all his Bombay troops at Kandahár.

On the 27th of June, while Ranjít Singh was drawing his last breath at Lahore, Keane led the bulk of his troops from Kandahár on a march of 230 miles to Ghazní, leaving a sufficient garrison behind him, and leaving also the siege-guns which he had brought on with so much difficulty through the Bolán and Khojak passes. This was a blunder which, but for the genius of an engineer officer, might have cost him very dear. The Sháh's troops followed a march behind, and Willshire's Bombay column brought up the rear. The whole force was still on reduced rations for want of carriage; and bodies of Ghilzai horsemen hovered on either flank, ready for plunder, but seldom venturing to attack. The line of march lay through open country rising gradually towards Khelát-i-Ghilzai, and higher still about Ghazní.

On the 21st of July the whole army came within sight of the famous stronghold whence, more than eight centuries earlier, the terrible Mahmúd had sallied forth again and again to harry the people and subdue the princes of northern India. According to Macnaghten, Burnes, and other of our 'politicals,' Ghazní was a place of no strength, and might easily be taken

by regular troops. Too late Keane repented him of the infatuation which had brought him thither without his heavy guns. Up the hill before him rose a walled city with a parapet sixty feet above the moat, and only one gate which had not been built up. Mining and escalading seemed alike impossible, and our six- and nine-pounder field guns were of no avail for breaching purposes. Time was precious and provisions were running short. Happily for Keane a traitor from the garrison, a nephew of Dost Muhammad, pointed out the only way to a successful assault, and Keane had just confidence in the courage of his soldiers and the resourcefulness of his engineers. Thompson proposed to blow in the Kábul Gate with powder, and carry the place by a surprise. His plan was accepted with all its hazards, for no other resource seemed open to an army threatened with starvation.

In the early dawn of the 23rd of July an explosion party led by Henry Durand, the eminent soldier-statesman of a later day, crossed the bridge and laid the powder-bags, one by one, below the gate. Durand himself, after more than one failure, set fire to the hose which Sergeant Robertson had helped to lay, and retired unhurt to a safe distance under a brisk fire, which did little harm to any of his comrades. Meanwhile, feint attacks were going on elsewhere, drawing off the garrisons attention from the true point of danger. When the explosion had done its work, some time elapsed before the right signal was sounded for the advance. Dennie's storming column

poured through the open gateway, closely followed by the main body under Colonel Sale; and after a short but fierce struggle between the Afghán sword and the British bayonet, Ghazní was won. The enemy fled in panic from the citadel, and sunrise saw the British colours floating over its battlements. Hundreds of dead Afgháns strewed the streets of the captured city, and many hundred prisoners, including Prince Haidar, fell into our hands. The ladies of his harem were treated with all courtesy, and no Afghán woman appears to have suffered personal harm [1].

The story of this gambler's throw, as told by Durand himself, shows how fearfully narrow was the line which parted success from failure. Keane, in fact, staked everything on the issue, for his troops had only two days' rations in hand, with small prospect of more food to come. As it was, he had cheaply earned a brilliant success with a loss in killed and wounded of less than two hundred. There was now no question of starving, for Ghazní had been stored with provisions for six months. And the capture of that important stronghold sealed, for a time, the fate of Kábul and Dost Muhammad. The Amír at once recalled Akbar from his post in the Kháibar hills. With a view to making one last stand at Arghandí, twenty-five miles westward of Kábul, he solemnly implored his followers on the Kurán to join him in making 'one last charge against those Farangi dogs.' But few of them had any heart for what seemed a

[1] Durand; Kaye; Sir G. Lawrence.

losing game; and Akbar returned to Kábul only to cover his father's flight into the wilds of the Hindu Kush.

Shortly after the fall of Ghazní the Nawáb Jabar Khán had ridden over to Sháh Shujá's camp with overtures of a peaceful tenour from his brother Dost Muhammad. The Sháh replied by offering his dreaded rival 'an honourable asylum' in British India. Jabar Khán treated the suggestion with honest scorn. 'His brother had no desire to lose his freedom and become a pensioner on British bounty.' Turning to Macnaghten, he asked him why the English were helping Sháh Shujá with arms and money, if he were indeed the rightful king of the country: 'Leave him now with us Afgháns, and let him rule us if he can.'

On the 30th of July Keane resumed his march upon Kábul, some ninety miles eastward of Ghazní. Four days later it was known in camp that Dost Muhammad, with a few followers, had fled from Arghandí towards Bámián. So long as he remained at large, his enemies could not breathe freely. A few hundred picked horsemen, led by the dashing James Outram and ten other English officers, were sent off at once in hot pursuit of their noble quarry. With them also marched a small body of Afghán horse commanded by Hájjí Khán Khákar, who was to act as guide. This man had been one of the first to desert the Amír and pay his homage to Sháh Shujá at Kandahár. The Sháh had given him a rich jághír and a post of high honour in the State. But the Hájjí

was already plotting against his new friends, when the fall of Ghazní arrested his purpose. He would wait, and see how the wind blew.

The story of that keen but futile chase has been well told by Sir George Lawrence, who took an active part in it. Outram's little force set off in the lightest marching order on the evening of August 3. Three days later two more officers with a few score troopers joined in the chase. For six days and nights, with short intervals of rest, the hunters rode on over rough and hilly ground, past scattered villages, up the steep pass over the Hindu Kush, as far as Bámián, heedless of the excuses repeatedly urged by their treacherous guide for delaying or abandoning a dangerous and fruitless chase. The Afgháns of the party were badly mounted, and could not or would not keep up with the rest. 'We have to obey our orders,' said Outram, in reply to the Hájjí's remonstrances, 'and if your men fail us at the critical moment, you will have to answer to Sháh Shujá with your life.' At Bámián they learned that Dost Muhammad with 2,000 horsemen and his son Akbar Khán, had fled beyond Saigán and found asylum with the Walí of Kúlum across the Balkh frontier[1].

After three days' rest at Bámián, Outram's party turned their faces towards Kábul, where Keane's army was already quartered. On the 7th of August Sháh Shujá-ul-Mulk, glittering with jewels and mounted on a white charger, had been escorted in triumph

[1] Lawrence's *Forty-three Years' Service.*

by British officers and troops through the streets of Kábul into the castled palace of the Bálá Hissár. No outburst of popular welcome greeted the Sháh's return to his capital after an absence of thirty years. Of those who came out to stare at the passing pageant, very few were seen to offer him a common salaam. 'It was more,' says Kaye, 'like a funeral procession than the entry of a king into the capital of his restored dominions.'

On Outram's arrival at Kábul, he reported to Sháh Shujá the seeming treachery of Hájjí Khán. The old traitor was arrested by the Sháh's command. Proofs of his treasonous practices were soon forthcoming; and the Hájjí was duly marched off a close prisoner to Hindustán. He was finally imprisoned in the riverside fortress of Chanár. Outram himself honestly believed that but for the Afghán's treachery, he would have caught the Amír. Their friends at Kábul however greeted the adventurers as madmen, who were lucky to have returned with their heads upon their shoulders; and Keane declared he 'had not supposed there were thirteen such asses in his whole force.' Lawrence was nearly of the same opinion, though he felt a just pride in the soldierly conduct of 'our Hindustáni troopers,' whose patience, fortitude, and good humour in very trying circumstances, 'nothing could exceed.'

On the 3rd of September the Sháhzádá, Prince Timúr, escorted by Wade and Macnaghten, passed with much pomp through the narrow streets of Kábul into the

Bálá Hissár. After a delay of six months at Peshâwar, his motley force of Hindus, Sikhs, and Afghâns, under the general control of Colonel Wade, had entered the Kháibar on the 22nd of July. One of Wade's ablest subalterns, Lieutenant Mackeson, a young political of the highest promise, commanded the irregular part of the force. Thanks mainly to his ubiquitous energy, the Afrídí defenders of the Pass were fain, after a few skirmishes, to abandon the fort of Alí Masjid, which Timúr's troops occupied on the 27th. Before the force reached Dháka at the top of the Pass, Akbar had begun his retreat upon Kábul in obedience or in anticipation of his father's summons. Thenceforth the road was clear for Wade's advance to the common goal, through the mountain ranges that still intervened.

During September the troops at Kábul rested from their prolonged labours, taking their fill of pleasure and recreation under cool skies, in a land of fruits, gardens, and fine scenery. The new king marked his return to power by instituting the Order of the Duráni Empire. Among the first knights of the new Order were Lord Auckland, Keane, Macnaghten, Burnes, Cotton, and Wade; while the minor decorations were freely scattered among officers of lower rank.

In England the victors of Ghazní became the heroes of the hour. Past blunders were forgotten or ignored in the blaze of a great success. Sir John Hobhouse was 'in high glee,' writes Greville, at the issue of an

enterprise, the chief credit of which he was wont to claim for himself. The usual honours and rewards were bestowed by a grateful nation upon their victorious troops. Their commander, Sir John Keane, received a peerage, and Willshire a baronetcy. The Governor-General was promoted to an earldom. Of the chief political officers Macnaghten and Pottinger were made baronets, and Wade a Knight of the Bath. Burnes had already got his reward.

The moment seemed to have come when the Army of the Indus might be withdrawn from Afghánistán in accordance with the pledges of the Simla Manifesto. The Ludhiána pensioner had been brought back in triumph to his grandfather's capital. Herát was safe in the hands of a Saduzai prince, Sháh Shujá's own nephew. Dost Muhammad was a powerless fugitive. The troops of all arms which Sháh Shujá and his son had brought from India were quite strong enough to cope with any local outbreak against the new rule. If the Sháh was worthy of all the help we had given him, now was the time for putting his kingly qualities to fair proof. If he were half as popular as Macnaghten had reported him, why should we hesitate to leave him alone, face to face with his own people? Most of our officers at Kábul were looking forward, as a thing of course, to the immediate withdrawal of our troops under the guarantee of October, 1838.

But the time for withdrawal did not seem ripe either to Sir William Macnaghten or to Lord Auckland. Even in his letters from Kandahár Macnaghten

had preached the duty of holding Afghánistán for several years, at whatever cost, as an outpost of our Indian Empire. In his Minute of the 20th of August, Lord Auckland contended that the withdrawal of our troops would be followed by the expulsion of Sháh Shujá, and that such a failure of all our plans would reflect disgrace on the Government and be a source of danger to the British power. In spite of his professed belief in the Sháh's popularity he shared, or affected to share, that monarch's dread of the defeated rival who might yet live to work him serious harm. Macnaghten was ambitious and a Russophobe; and the Envoy-Minister to a king of his own making might hope to play a prominent part in the politics of Central Asia. 'The independence and integrity of Afghánistán' could not be deemed secure while Dost Muhammad was still at large, and a Russian force at Orenburg was preparing for a march on Khíva. He must have known that the Sháh's only chance of winning the loyal support of his turbulent chiefs and people lay in the speedy disappearance of every British soldier from Afghán ground. He knew also that the death of Ranjít Singh had removed the only solid guarantee for the good behaviour of our Sikh allies. The drain upon the Indian treasuries was already serious, while the lack of troops in many of our Indian garrisons gave cause for just anxiety. But the distant spectre of Russian aggrandizement blinded the Envoy to every difficulty nearer home.

Lord Auckland, who was still in the Upper Pro-

vinces, decided to withdraw a part of the invading army, leaving strong garrisons at Kábul and Kandahár, Ghazní, and Jalálábád. The Bombay column under General Willshire was to march down to Sind by way of Khelát, while Keane with a few of his Bengal regiments and batteries would return homeward through the Kháibar and the Punjab. The army of occupation, nearly 10,000 strong, was to be commanded by Sir Willoughby Cotton; while Major-General Nott of the Bengal Army was ordered up from Quetta to command the troops at Kandahár.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BEGINNING OF DIFFICULTIES

ON the 18th of September the Bombay force began its march homewards. Instead of making straight from Quetta for the Bolán Pass, Willshire had been ordered by Macnaghten to march southward upon Khelát, the capital of Biluchistán, for the purpose of punishing the ruler of the country, Mehráb Khán, charged by Burnes with divers acts of hostility and bad faith in breach of his treaty with the Indian Government. In vain did the Khán plead his utter powerlessness to restrain Biluchi robbers from plundering our baggage, and to furnish the requisite supplies from a country on the brink of famine. No mercy was to be shown to the chief who had given Sháh Shujá a kindly welcome during his flight in 1834 from Kandahár. On the 13th of November, 1839, Khelát was carried by storm, after a desperate struggle, in which the brave old Khán and eight of his chief officers fell, fighting stubbornly to the last. His dominions were transferred to a kinsman, who was not destined to hold them long. Later inquiries fixed the blame for the Khán's alleged misdeeds upon his crafty Wazír, who had

played upon Burnes's credulity as cunningly as Iago played upon the Moor's [1].

In the middle of October Keane himself with the residue of his Bengal troops was quietly marching towards Peshâwar. Shortly before his departure from Kâbul, the Envoy had taken fright at tidings just received from Pottinger at Herât concerning the intended march of a Russian force against the Khân of Khíva. He imparted to Keane by letter his forebodings of Russian progress to the banks of the Oxus. Keane ridiculed his friend's fears, and declared that 'the only banks he now thought of were the banks of the Thames.' His own fears for the future were not of Russian encroachments, but of Afghân revolts. 'I cannot but congratulate you on quitting the country' —he said to an officer who had been ordered to join his force—'for mark my words, it will not be long before some signal catastrophe takes place.' He himself pursued his way unmolested through the Khâibar. But hardly had his troops emerged from its gloomy gorges, when the Afrídís of the Pass renewed their attacks upon the little garrison of Alí Masjid, which commands the eastern outlets from the Pass. After some lively skirmishing checked by the advance of troops from Peshâwar and Jalâlâbâd, Macnaghten's agent, Captain Mackeson, induced the sturdy clansmen of the Khâibar to refrain from further molestation in return for a yearly subsidy of £8,000 [2].

This arrangement for keeping the passes open was

[1] Kaye. [2] Durand; Kaye; *Afghan Papers.*

certainly simpler, cheaper, and far more effective than any system of armed coercion applied to a race of hardy plunder-loving mountaineers, who owned no real allegiance to any neighbouring sovereign, and had always claimed the right to levy toll upon everything that passed through the Kháibar. And that right had been duly acknowledged by successive rulers of Afghánistán. Even the masterful Ahmad Sháh had to pay the customary blackmail for the safe passage of his troops and caravans.

Machaghten's fussy ambition was not to be curbed either by Keane's scoffing or by a wise regard for practical likelihoods. With winter near at hand, and with no real knowledge of the country beyond Kábul, he ordered the Sháh's Gúrkha regiment and a native troop of horse-artillery to march across some of the loftiest passes of the Hindu Kush to Bámián, and there await the arrival of his agent, Dr. Lord. This strange move was intended as a kind of general menace to Russia, Dost Muhammad, and the Khán of Bokhára, who held an English envoy in close arrest. After a month of infinite labour the guns were dragged over the mountains; but Dr. Lord had not gone far from Kábul when his Afghán escort frightened him back again with groundless stories of a great Turkmán rising on behalf of the exiled Amír. As it happened, there was no armed rising anywhere between the Oxus and the Hindu Kush; while Dost Muhammad was to find at Bokhára an enemy rather than a friend. The detachment at Bámián could

bring no possible help to Colonel Stoddart, and the Russian advance on Khíva was planned for the rescue of many hundred Russian captives from lifelong slavery in Turkistán.

When Lord afterwards joined the detachment at Bámián he was not long in proving his absurd unfitness for the work entrusted to him. It was needful, perhaps, in view of the impending winter, to turn out the occupants of three small forts in order that his own troops might be comfortably lodged, and even to ensure them a due supply of food by putting pressure upon reluctant villagers whose stocks were none too large for themselves. But Lord proceeded to act as if the neighbouring country were under his sole command. In the Saighán valley, which lay between him and the Uzbek chiefship of Kúlum, where the Amír's family still found shelter, he took an active part in a quarrel between two rival chiefs, a quarrel in which we had not the least concern. Every rumour, however wild, stirred him into fresh activity. In December he heard that Dost Muhammad and the ruler of Bokhára were leagued together against the garrison of Bámián. Writing off to Burnes for more troops from Kábul in the depth of an Afghán winter, he set a portion of his force to work on intrenchments, while the remainder were marched forward into the Saighán valley, to aid in holding an untenable fort. These and similar displays of strenuous folly provoked the ill-will of neighbouring Uzbek chiefs; and served to convert the Khán of Bokhára from Dost

Muhammad's jailor into his ally[1]. And, worse still, they failed to soften the heart of that fierce tyrant towards another captive, the ill-fated Colonel Stoddart, whom McNeill, some months before, had sent on a friendly mission to the Khán's Court.

Meanwhile D'Arcy Todd had taken at Herát the place of Eldred Pottinger, returning to India on leave. Sháh Kámrán's new engagements with his English friends, who were so lavish of rupees and so helpful in strengthening the defences of his frontier city, did not prevent him and his villainous Wazír from playing their old game of intrigue at Teherán and among the Khánates along the Oxus. Our meddling and fussing policy was sowing throughout Central Asia the seeds of a not unreasonable mistrust. Why were all those English *Sahibs* riding to and fro, scattering gold, promises, and threats over countries so remote from the Anglo-Indian frontier? Macnaghten's letters of this period showed his eagerness to annex Herát, to coerce the Sikhs into 'macadamizing the Punjab,' and to carry our arms across the wilds of Balkh even to the banks of the Upper Oxus. If the rulers of Herát got scent of these designs, no wonder they took our money and intrigued against us at the same time!

If they succeeded in working upon the jealous fears of the ruler of Bokhára, who treated Stoddart as an enemy in disguise, their appeals were wasted upon the Khán of Khíva, whose Khánate lay to the west of

[1] Durand.

Bokhára, and who had no eye for other dangers than those which threatened him from a Russian march upon his capital. Before the close of 1839 Todd despatched Captain James Abbott across the wide Turkman steppe, to mediate with the Khán of Khíva for the deliverance of Russian captives held in bondage by his subjects. Abbott's stern courage and noble bearing made up for his ignorance of the language and the very vague character of his instructions. The Khán listened courteously to the young Envoy's overtures, and agreed to a treaty which Lord Auckland afterwards disavowed, on the plea that Todd's envoy had exceeded his powers. Meanwhile the Khán had deputed Abbott on a mission of amity to the Tzar himself. His place at the Khán's Court was presently filled by Captain Richmond Shakespeare, who had the pleasure of conducting to Orenburg four hundred Russian slaves set free by the Khán's orders.

It was fortunate perhaps for these poor creatures that their return to freedom was decreed before the utter collapse of Perovski's expedition became known at Khíva. In the course of November, 1839, Perovski had led out of Orenburg a force of 5,000 horse and foot with a score of guns and 10,000 camels, on his long and painful march through a country two-thirds of which was a howling desert. The march had been timed for the following April; but our feats of arms and freaks of diplomacy in Central Asia had provoked the Tzar into the folly of ordering it to begin with the first snows of a northern winter. This rash bravado

met with its full reward. Perovski's column struggled on week after week with amazing hardihood through the bleak snow-covered wastes, losing men, horses, and camels in daily increasing numbers, until its leader was driven to choose between certain annihilation and a timely retreat. He returned to Orenburg with the loss of nearly all his baggage and half his men [1].

While Perovski was marching from the Caspian towards the Aral Sea, Sháh Shujá and his Envoy set out from Kábul to pass the winter in the milder climate of Jalálábád; Burnes staying behind as Macnaghten's deputy, while Sir Robert Sale commanded the troops in garrison. The question of housing those troops had just been settled by Macnaghten himself in sole accordance with the petulant demands of his royal puppet, who owed everything to the victors of Ghazní. In vain had Durand, as chief engineer, insisted on the vital importance of the Bálá Hissár for every purpose alike of shelter and defence. It commanded the city, it was strong enough to defy attack from any Afghán force; it could easily be made yet stronger, and it offered ample room for the housing of a whole brigade. Some of our troops had been quartered there from the first, and barracks for the remainder could be built at trifling cost. Sale, of course, and every officer of any experience, agreed with Durand; nor was the Envoy himself blind to the expediency of retaining a firm hold upon the Sháh's citadel. With the Sháh's unwilling consent

[1] *Afghan Blue-Book.*

our pioneers went to work upon new buildings and needful repairs.

But Sháh Shujá presently changed his mind, declared that the presence of British troops so near his own palace was a slur upon his dignity and a cause of just offence to his people, and demanded for the use of his large harem the buildings occupied by the 13th Foot. In an evil hour for himself and his countrymen Macnaghten gave way. The works were discontinued; Sale's soldiers were lodged elsewhere, and the defence of the Bálá Hissár was made over to a body of the Sháh's own troops. Cantonments for Sale's force were erected on a plain far beyond the city, 'in low swampy ground,' says Sir G. Lawrence, 'overlooked and commanded by a low range of hills, and several small forts . . . within musket range.' They were surrounded by a low rampart with a bastion at each corner, and by a narrow ditch. Outside the intrenchment was the Residency enclosure, and some way off stood a fort containing the commissariat stores. The site of the cantonments had been fixed upon by Burnes, and sanctioned by Sir Willoughby Cotton, during Macnaghten's absence at Jalálábád. A worse position for such a garrison it would have been impossible to select. Cotton, however, did protest against the folly of leaving commissariat stores in an isolated post outside the intrenchment; and he often urged Lord Auckland to sanction the purchase of all the neighbouring forts [1]. But no heed was given

[1] Sir G. Lawrence.

to such advice. It seemed as if every conceivable blunder was to mark the development of our Afghán policy.

The winter of 1839–40 brought a comparative lull in Afghán affairs. During the reign of frost and snow the most turbulent Afgháns are wont to keep quiet. An attempt to capture the fort of a refractory chief in the Kunair valley, a few marches from Jalálábád, met with a severe repulse for Orchard's column, but next day the fort was evacuated. Macnaghten busied himself with questions of local revenue and expenditure, with making frequent appeals to his Government for money in aid of the Sháh's apparent needs, with schemes for raising new levies drilled and commanded by British officers in the Sháh's name, and with carefully watching the course of events outside the Afghán frontiers. Both he and Burnes were longing for the moment when Herát and Pesháwar should be annexed to the new Duráni Empire. The duty of 'curbing the Singhs' and of driving Kámrán and his plotting crew out of Herát was the constant theme of Macnaghten's letters to the Governor-General. But Lord Auckland, who had now returned to Calcutta and the care of his Council, proceeded to put the curb on the right mouth. His Commander-in-Chief, Sir Jasper Nicolls, a soldier who had seen much Indian service, was reading him a lesson of economy and practical wisdom, which closed his ears for a time to the Envoy's reckless importunities.

At the foot of a paper detailing the strength of the troops employed beyond the Sutlej, Nicolls added a remark that the aggregate, except in the number of horse and light guns, exceeded the two armies which, under Lake and Wellesley in 1803, beat down the great army of Daulat Ráo Sindhia. 'I did this'—he wrote—'in the hope of inducing Lord Auckland to pause before he sanctioned any advance upon Balkh or to Herát.' His advice was taken so far as Herát at least was concerned. Kámrán and Yár Muhammad received a general pardon for their past offences, together with more of our money, on the strength of promises which they had no intention of keeping longer than it might suit them [1].

As for the Sikhs, then nominally governed by the weak-witted Karak Singh, they viewed with natural misgivings the frequent passing of our troops and convoys through the Punjab. The Sikh Government openly complained of the unforeseen uses to which we had turned the Tripartite Treaty, and they hotly repelled the Envoy's attempts to enforce Sháh Shujá's claims to the greater part of the Pesháwar province, in breach of the treaty of 1834. Macnaghten further accused them not only of sheltering Afghán refugees, but of secretly encouraging Dost Muhammad to organize a revolt against the Sháh. The latter charge was scornfully denied, and George Clerk, who had succeeded Wade as Agent for the Punjab frontier, admitted that the writing of secret and traitorous

[1] Kaye.

letters was inconsistent with the frank and fearless nature of the Sikh[1].

In April 1840, Sháh Shujá and Sir W. Macnaghten returned to Kábul. The Duke of Wellington had foretold that our real difficulties in Afghánistán would begin at the end of a successful campaign. In spite of a series of astonishing blunders, we had replaced Sháh Shujá on the throne of his very few ancestors. But to conquer the country was one thing, to settle it under a rule propped up by foreign bayonets was quite another. The Afgháns are a group of hardy, war-loving, bigoted, unruly tribes, ready to quarrel upon any pretext, to take up arms for revenge or the chance of plunder, to carry on blood-feuds between tribe and tribe, family and family, for generations. But they are not less ready to combine at need against invaders of alien race, of an obnoxious creed, and of strange, uncongenial habits, who curtail their rude freedom, shock their prejudices, and insult their pride. These Montenegrins of Central Asia might be cowed for a time by the argument of superior force, or soothed by a careful distribution of rupees. But how long would they keep quiet, when money became scarcer, and our diminished garrison was scattered about a country larger than Spain, and more rugged than Switzerland?

While the Sháh retained a certain show of authority, its substance remained in the Envoy's hands. Within certain limits the puppet sovereign might do as much

[1] Cunningham's *History of the Sikhs.*

mischief as he and his favourites pleased; and they did it very successfully. But Macnaghten and his officers virtually governed in the Sháh's name. No troops could be moved without the Envoy's sanction; English officers had a voice in the civil government; our soldiers acted as the Sháh's police, and the Indian Treasury supplied the chief means of maintaining the new rule. What revenue the Sháh himself could gather from his subjects for the payment of his own troops and officials was raised by methods the least likely to make him popular with the classes most affected by the new system, especially with tribal chiefs accustomed to raise their own levies in time of need. It became daily clearer, even to Macnaghten himself, that the new Duráni Empire existed only by force of British bayonets and British gold.

In the spring of 1840, the fierce Ghilzai clans of the hill-country between Kandahár and Ghazní, who had never brooked a ruler, save one of themselves, for ages past, and who lived mainly by plundering forays and the heavy tolls wrung from passing caravans, took up arms in defence of their ancient rights and perquisites, and attempted to block the roads between Kandahár and Kábul. General William Nott, an old Company's officer, who commanded the Kandahár garrison, made prompt answer to this bold challenge. In the middle of May some two or three thousand Ghilzai highlanders charged fiercely at the guns and Sepoys of the little force which Captain Anderson had led out a week before from Kandahár. Swept

down by showers of grape from our guns, their horsemen hurled back again and again from the bayonets of Spence's infantry, the assailants sullenly withdrew, leaving two hundred dead upon the field. Nott's energy in other directions gave point to the moral of this defeat, and impelled the Ghilzai leaders to close with Macnaghten's offer of Rs. 30,000 a year, payable so long as they kept the roads open for our troops and convoys[1].

By this time events were happening on the northern and southern frontiers of the new kingdom, which boded ill for the success of Macnaghten's 'beautiful game.' The Marris, Khákars, and other Biluchi tribes were rising all along the road from Quetta to the borders of Upper Sind. They captured hundreds of convoy camels, and cut to pieces several detachments of our Sepoys. The Khákar insurgents in June attacked Bean's small garrison at Quetta, but were beaten off with some loss. They renewed the attack with larger numbers in July, but the reinforced garrison easily repulsed them. A body of Biluchis, headed by the youthful son of Mehráb Khán, next marched against Khelát. Treachery within the fort ensured its surrender on terms which acknowledged Nasír Khán as the rightful sovereign in the room of Lord Auckland's nominee. Loveday, who commanded the garrison, was carried off a prisoner by the man in whose good faith he had too readily trusted, and afterwards paid with his life for the error which

[1] Kaye; Durand; Stocqueler's *Life of Sir William Nott.*

tempted him to tarry too long within the captured city.

Clibborn's attempt to relieve Brown's isolated outpost at Káhan, among the foot-hills that border the plains of western Sind, issued in a disastrous failure. Nearly half his detachment were slain or wounded on the 31st of August by the swords of their fierce assailants in the Nafusk Pass. Nothing but the fire from Stamford's guns saved the whole 600 from annihilation. Clibborn had to spike all his guns and abandon his large convoy, before beginning a retreat in which many of his famished Sepoys died of wounds or exhaustion under a burning sun. Brown himself, nearly a month later, was allowed to withdraw his little garrison and their only gun from the post he had held so bravely while any hope of succour still remained. Early in November Khelát was reoccupied by troops from Kandahár; but Nasír Khán, who had withdrawn his garrison betimes, refused to humble himself before Sháh Shujá, whom he regarded as his father's murderer. He retreated with his followers to the hill-country about the Bolán, where they still tried the mettle of our troops. At last, on the 1st of December, his brave Biluchis encountered a British column at Kotra. After a fierce struggle, in which some of their boldest leaders were slain or captured by Marshall's men, the remainder fled disheartened. Nasír Khán buried himself in the wilds of Biluchistán; and Nott's communications with the line of the Indus were again secure[1].

[1] Durand; Stocqueler.

The troubles on the northern frontier of Afghánistán in the year 1840 grew out of Lord's coercive policy towards all who came within his reach. His savage reprisals on certain Hazára clansmen who refused to supply any more forage for his troop-horses added fuel to the flame lit up by his former escapades. Lord then renewed his demand on Jabar Khán for the surrender of Dost Muhammad's family. As the wary Afghán still hesitated, a strong scouting party set off in June from Bámián towards Kúlum. It succeeded not only in securing the desired surrender, but in taking peaceful possession of a strong fort at Bájgah, some way beyond Saigán. This was speedily garrisoned by a wing of the Sháh's Gúrkha regiment. Macnaghten at this time was not in the best of tempers. He had been snubbed by Lord Auckland in the matter of Herát and Pesháwar. His countrymen in Afghánistán were saying or writing bitter things against his good friend the Sháh, and he saw in Burnes a rival impatient to fill his place. It was a comfort to feel that the game which he might not play elsewhere was being played so vigorously by his subaltern at Bámián. Lord's proceedings met with his ready sanction, and some more troops were sent to his agent's support.

But the advance to Bájgah had broken the last meshes of the web which Macnaghten had sought to weave around the fugitive Amír of Kábul. The whole country between the Oxus and the Hindu Kush had fairly taken alarm at Lord's progress through the

highlands of Balkh. The Khán of Bokhára set Dost Muhammad and his two sons, Akbar and Afzal, free to fight against the common enemy. The chiefs of Kúlum and Kúndúz, and the Uzbek clans of Balkh rallied to the cause of Dost Muhammad and Islám. The hardy Uzbeks and Hazáras flocked in thousands to the standard of a leader who hoped to rid them of the arrogant infidel, and whose name still had power to draw over to his side bodies of Afghán horsemen serving under the British flag. In August the Amír marched from Kúlum towards Bájgah, whence young Rattray, as Lord's deputy, carried off the garrison betimes to Bámián, all but a body of Jánbáz horse, who went over to the enemy. The flame of revolt spread to the Kohistán, and even in Kábul many of the citizens exulted over the first vague rumours of the Amír's success. 'Please God!'—they said—'the Dost's army will soon rid the land of the Farangís, and destroy them to a man with their Káfir king[1].'

Such hopes, however, were not then to be fulfilled. By the middle of September the bold Colonel Dennie had taken command of the reinforced troops at Bámián. On the 17th Dennie marched out with 300 sabres, 500 bayonets, and two guns, against some bodies of Uzbek horse who had made their way into the valley. After driving in the enemy's outposts he suddenly found himself confronted by the Amír's whole army, six or seven thousand strong. Heedless of the odds against him he moved on to the attack.

[1] Lawrence; Durand.

The fire from Mackenzie's guns, and the dashing advance of his active little Gúrkhas, threw the enemy into a state of confusion, which Hart's and Anderson's troopers finally turned into utter rout. The chiefs of Kúlum and Kúndúz ere long tendered their submission; but Dost Muhammad, with his sons and a remnant of faithful followers, fled over the hills into the neighbourhood of the Kohistán, where he might still hope for aid from some of the chiefs who had just been making promises of fealty to the Sháh.

To watch his movements and counteract his designs, a force was despatched from Kábul under the command of Sir Robert Sale, and the political guidance of Sir Alexander Burnes. The greater part of October was spent in attacking and destroying fortlets, in burning villages, and generally harassing the refractory chiefs. Some vain attempts were made to hunt down the Amír himself, who was hiding somewhere in the Kohistán. Meanwhile he was quietly mustering his adherents for another fight against the infidel. At last, on the 2nd of November, Sale came up with Dost Muhammad's force, strongly posted at Parwándarra on rough ground that sloped up towards the adjacent Nijrow hills. As Salter's brigade moved forward the enemy fell back. Hoping to cut off their retreat Salter sent out his cavalry from both flanks. Two squadrons of the 2nd Bengal Cavalry, skirting the hill to their right, came upon a small body of Afghán horsemen whom Dost Muhammad was leading off the field. Turning at his command, and fired by

his exhortations, they prepared to repel their pursuers. At that moment Fraser, who commanded the two squadrons, received an order for their recall. But instead of retiring before so weak a foe, Fraser gave the word to charge. His officers dashed forward, expecting their men to follow. But the troopers, perplexed and panic-stricken, wavered, turned, and fled like scared sheep. Three of their officers, including Dr. Lord, were slain, while Fraser and Ponsonby got off with severe wounds. Fraser himself, covered with blood, his sword-arm disabled, rode up to Sale, and calmly reported the failure of his attack. For a time the Afghâns defiantly held their ground, until the advance of Sale's guns and infantry warned them to withdraw.

With characteristic rashness, Burnes immediately wrote off to Macnaghten, urging him to recall Sale's column, and to mass all his troops for the defence of Kábul. The Envoy himself had begun to talk of 'submitting to the disgrace of being shut up for a time' in that city. Guns were mounted on the Bálá Hissár, and the guards everywhere increased. For a warm-blooded man of wide aims and soaring ambition, who wrote of Lord Auckland's recent inaction as 'drivelling beneath contempt,' and sighed for 'a Wellesley or a Hastings' to deal with a crisis which neither of those statesmen would have provoked, the whole state of things was surely exasperating. Macnaghten's wrath against the fancied author of all these troubles lowered him almost to Sháh Shujá's own level.

If he could not bring himself to sanction the Sháh's scheme for putting a price upon the head 'of that dog,' the great Bárakzái leader, he could write to Lord Auckland that no mercy should be shown to Dost Muhammad; but that, in the event of his capture, he would request the Sháh 'not to execute him, till I can ascertain your Lordship's sentiments [1].'

On the 4th of November, 1840, shortly after the receipt of Burnes's desponding letter, the Envoy and his assistant, George Lawrence, were returning 'sad and cast down' from their evening ride, when an Afghán horseman rode up and told them that Dost Muhammad himself was close at hand. In a moment the Amír came up, threw himself from his horse, caught hold of the Envoy's stirrup, and then of his hand, which he placed upon his own lips and forehead, in token of his entire submission. Sir William dismounting bade his suppliant a kindly welcome, and led him through the Residency garden into his own room. After bowing to the ground and touching the floor with his forehead, the Amír rose and presented his sword to the Envoy, who returned it to its owner with some words of gracious encouragement. 'The Amír,' says Lawrence, 'was a robust, powerful man, with a sharp aquiline nose, highly arched eyebrows, and a grey beard and moustache, which evidently had not been trimmed for a long time.' Letters were written at his own request to three of his sons, urging them to come at once to Kábul and make

[1] Kaye.

their submission. His first inquiries were for those of his family who had been safely lodged in British keeping at Ghazní. He talked freely with Macnaghten over his late adventures, how he had made up his mind to surrender before the fight of Parwándarra, and had quietly ridden off with a few staunch followers to fulfil his purpose on the evening after the fight.

A tent was pitched for him in the Residency 'compound,' and Captain Lawrence was placed in temporary charge of the noble prisoner. On the 6th the Amír was handed over to the care of Captain Peter Nicolson, who was presently to escort him to Hindustán. During his stay at Kábul the captive Bárakzái was treated with all courtesy not only by the leading officers of the garrison, who admired him as much as they despised Sháh Shujá, but above all by the same Macnaghten who had just been thirsting for his blood. Lord Auckland must have smiled at the contrast between his Envoy's previous letters and that in which he now pleaded for liberal treatment of the 'villain' whom Sháh Shujá refused to see. Macnaghten contended that the case of the Ludhiána pensioner furnished no true parallel to that of the Amír. 'The Sháh had no claim upon us; we had no hand in depriving him of his kingdom; whereas we ejected the Dost who never offended us, in support of our policy of which he is the victim.' Such were the few and pithy words in which the Envoy arraigned the justice of that very policy which he had been

among the first to advocate, and the most eager to carry through. His appeal to Lord Auckland's sense of justice was not made in vain, for the victim was everywhere received with becoming honour, and consoled with a pension of £20,000 a year[1].

On the 13th the Amír and his son, Afzal Khán, began their march in company with Sir Willoughby Cotton, towards Jalálábád, whence a strong body of troops returning homewards escorted them across the Punjab to Ludhiána.

Early in December the Sháh and the Envoy retired again for the winter to Jalálábád. Once more there was a lull in Afghán affairs. Macnaghten's sanguine spirit mistook the lull for a settled calm. In spite of late experience, of warnings from many quarters, from soldiers like Nott, and politicals like Todd and Rawlinson, the Envoy still fondled his absurd belief in the power of British gold and bayonets to reconcile a turbulent people to the rule of a puppet king surrounded by worthless favourites, and played upon by the hired tools of foreign infidels. He would not hear a word spoken against the Sháh, whom Nott and other shrewd observers accused of plotting with his fellow-tribesmen to get rid of his English friends. If the Envoy could have had his own way, Nott himself, the ablest officer in the country, who ought by right of merit and long service to have replaced Cotton at Kábul, would have been summarily recalled from Kandahár.

[1] Lawrence; Kaye.

CHAPTER IX

ON THE BRINK OF A CATASTROPHE

THE lull which followed the surrender of Dost Muhammad was broken for awhile in December by a rising among the Duráni clans to the west of Kandahár. A policy which excluded the chiefs of the Sháh's own tribe from any share in the offices and dignities engrossed by a band of greedy upstarts could hardly fail to inflame their discontent with a rule enforced by the continued presence of foreign bayonets. One of the chiefs, named Aktar Khán, bore a special grudge against the ministers who had rejected his claim to the lordship of Zamíndáwar. Calling his followers into the field, he routed a body of the Sháh's troops on the 29th of December, and took their guns. Five days later his own troops were badly beaten by the force which Farrington had led out from Kandahár; and the hard winter froze up the revolt.

Before leaving Jalalábád, Cotton had made his command over to General Elphinstone, whom Lord Auckland had induced against his will,—for he felt himself too old and infirm for such a duty,—to come up from India and take Cotton's place. 'You will have

nothing to do here: all is peace,' said the departing general to his successor, who was destined never to see India again. In the following February Macnaghten himself, writing from Jalálábád, declared the general tranquillity to be 'perfectly miraculous,' as if the Afghán winter had nothing to do with the seeming miracle. The Envoy in truth saw only what he wished to see, and was always oscillating between his professed belief in Sháh Shujá's popularity and his settled conviction that the country must be occupied by our troops for many years to come. If he could only have had a free hand aided by an unlimited purse, he might have succeeded in playing out the 'beautiful game' of British supremacy in Central Asia.

But the Court of Directors had no mind to help in realizing the costly projects of so reckless an engineer. They had seen all the savings of Bentinck's and Metcalfe's resolute thrift swallowed up in furtherance of an enterprise of which they had never approved. They saw an army of 25,000 men employed at India's cost in supporting a Government which had no means of paying its own expenses. Herát alone was taxing the Indian Treasury at the rate of nearly £200,000 a year. Our army of occupation involved an additional charge of a million and a half yearly. The subsidies to the Ghilzai and Afrídí tribes, and some part of the Sháh's civil expenses were defrayed by the Indian taxpayer. The Envoy himself kept asking for more troops and more money. If Lord Auckland would not

hand Herát over to Sháh Shujá, the presence of a British contingent might serve at least to keep the rulers of that province true to their English allies. To this scheme also the Governor-General would not agree, in the face of an empty treasury and of warnings received from Leadenhall Street. Towards the close of 1840 the Directors requested Lord Auckland 'seriously to consider which of the two alternatives —a speedy retreat from Afghánistán or a considerable increase of the military force in that country'—he might feel it his duty to adopt. 'We are convinced'—they wrote—'that you have no middle course to pursue with safety and with honour.'

The Court for their part would prefer 'the entire abandonment of the country, and a frank confession of complete failure,' to the folly of attempting with a small force, or by the mere influence of British Residents, to maintain peace within the Sháh's dominions and prevent aggression from without. Another letter, written after receiving the news of Dost Muhammad's surrender, affirmed the Court's adherence to their previous views. The question came before Lord Auckland's Council in March, 1841. In spite of an increased outlay of three millions and a half, in spite of the known antagonism of his Commander-in-Chief, the Governor-General, backed by Messrs. Bird and Prinsep, decided in effect to go on as he had begun. A loan was opened in Calcutta, and Macnaghten was entreated to keep down the expenditure in Afghánistán. 'How will it end?' wrote

Sir Jasper Nicolls, who felt certain that the whole thing would break down. 'Unless a large accession of Punjab territory comes in to connect us safely with Kábul, and to aid our very heavy expenses, *we must withdraw.*'

Macnaghten scouted the very notion of withdrawal as 'an unparalleled political atrocity.' It would be 'a cheat of the first magnitude,' as well as a positive breach of treaty, to leave Shujá at such a time to his own devices, in the midst of a novel experiment at governing the Afghâns according to European ideas. Such experiments, as we know from recent instances, never do come to the end desired. Diplomacy is fertile in excuses for not withdrawing the hand from the plough. The Envoy insisted that the Sháh's own force, aided by one English regiment at Kábul and another at Kandahár, would amply suffice to keep the whole country in order. Lord Auckland shrank from a full and timely confession of his utter failure at a moment when everything, from the collapse of the Russian march against Khíva to the surrender of Dost Muhammad, seemed to justify the recall of our troops from Afghánistán. The last of the Sibylline books had been offered and rejected[1].

Meanwhile Todd's mission to Herát was drawing to an abrupt close. The honest officer of Bengal Artillery found himself duped at every turn by Yár Muhammad and his fellow-swindlers, who played against him with loaded dice. They renewed their intrigues with the

[1] Kaye.

Sháh of Persia, and offered help to the Duráni insurgents in Zamíndáwar. They got fresh subsidies under false pretences out of Todd, whose eyes were opened too late to the Wazír's audacious perfidies. In February, 1841, Todd agreed to comply with the Wazír's demands for more money, if Kámrán would admit a British garrison into Herát. The Wazír replied by demanding the retirement of the Mission unless the money were paid down. Hopeless of achieving the main object of his errand, Todd withdrew the Mission at once, to the extreme annoyance of Lord Auckland, who hastened to disavow his Agent's indiscreet demand, and to remove him from political employ. Todd returned to regimental duty; while Macnaghten, the prime mover in the policy thus condemned, was simply reminded that 'we should first learn to quiet and control the positions we occupied, before we plunged onwards[1].'

In that same month of February the despatch of troops from Jalálábád, under Colonel Shelton of the 44th Foot, against an insurgent tribe in the Nazirán valley, furnished a curious comment on the miraculous tranquillity of which the Envoy had spoken a few days before. By the middle of March Shelton's force had destroyed a hundred fortlets in that district. Aktar Khán, the Duráni leader, had by this time made his submission at Kandahár; but a new cause of quarrel sprang up in the country watered by the Tarnak. The needless storming of a small fort in the Tarnak valley, and the measures taken for strengthen-

[1] Durand.

ing the new post at Khelát-i-Ghilzai provoked a large gathering of the Ghilzai clans in those parts. On the 9th of May they attacked a strong convoy marching towards Khelát-i-Ghilzai under one of Nott's best officers, Colonel Wymer. After five hours of sharp fighting, in which our guns and bayonets outmatched the wild rush of multitudinous swordsmen, the enemy withdrew their shattered forces, and left Wymer free to carry out his purpose.

By that time the restless Aktar Khán had once more summoned his Durání clansmen into the field against the Farangí invaders. Woodburn's troops, advancing to the Helmand early in July, had to sustain a long day's fight, with varying fortune, against a numerous and resolute foe, who, thanks to the cowardice of the Jánbáz Horse, were not beaten off till near midnight. On the 17th of August Griffin's victory at Kháwind more than atoned for Woodburn's partial failure. Hart led his Jánbáz horsemen accompanied by Prince Safdar Jang, a son of the Sháh, against a foe already yielding ground, and turned the growing disorder into utter rout. Some days earlier, another of Nott's detachments under Colonel Chambers had driven the Ghilzai insurgents back to their hills. Once more there set in a lull which deceived no one at Kandahár.

Macnaghten, however, could not help crowing over the 'cheering prospects' which everywhere met his gaze. 'From Mukín to the Kháibar Pass all is content and tranquillity; and wherever we Europeans

go, we are received with respect, and attention, and welcome.' He had just accepted the Government of Bombay in the room of Sir James Carnac; and George Lawrence was to bear him company for a year's leave, while Burnes took the Envoy's place at Kábul. Gladdened by thoughts of coming rest in a higher office, Macnaghten coloured all things with the reflexion of his own happiness. 'The country,' he said in a private letter, 'was perfectly quiet from Dan to Beersheba.' Sháh Shujá was 'deservedly popular' with all classes except the Kháns, who were 'too contemptible to be cared about.' He refused to see how restive the Sháh was waxing under our hard unbending yoke. To him the Afgháns were so many children; and as children we ought to treat them. 'If we put our naughty boy in a corner, the rest will be terrified;' which meant in plainer English, that if Aktar Khán could be caught and hanged by way of example, his followers would cease to trouble us any more [1].

Very different was the view which Nott and Rawlinson took of the position in Afghánistán. Nott was no courtier to suit his speech to his company, but a brave, blunt, war-tried soldier of the Bengal army, with a quick temper and a cool clear head. He looked upon the Envoy as a mischievous enthusiast, and flung out many a jeer at his political agents, whose meddlesome bungling had 'ruined our cause, and bared the throat of every European in this country

[1] Kaye; Durand; Lawrence.

to the sword and knife of the revengeful Afghán and the bloody Biluch.' Unless several regiments were quickly sent from India, not a man, he declared, 'will be left to note the fate of his comrades. Nothing but force will ever make them submit to Sháh Shujá, who is most certainly as great a scoundrel as ever lived[1].' Nott's strictures on the 'politicals,' whose zeal was not always tempered by modesty, sound judgement, or special experience, contained a large amount of truth, spread perhaps over too wide a surface.

The old soldier's opinion of the Sháh differed only in the strength of his language from the opinion held by Captain Henry Rawlinson, who had succeeded Leech in the middle of 1840 as Political Agent at Kandahár. A good officer and accomplished Eastern scholar, Rawlinson had begun his diplomatic career in Persia, whence he brought with him to his new post much serviceable knowledge of Central Asian affairs, an easy aptitude for official business, with a sharp eye for native cunning, and the tact which enabled him to work in harmony with his military colleague. Macnaghten called him an alarmist; but events were to justify the precautions taken by Nott and Rawlinson against dangers which the Envoy steadily ignored or underrated.

Eldred Pottinger, our political agent in the Kohistán, was another alarmist of the Rawlinson type. In the country lying a little to the north of Kábul he found disaffection, open or latent, as rife as ever among all

[1] Stocqueler.

classes of the people. 'Hatred of foreign dominion, fanaticism, the licentiousness of the troops, and especially the impunity with which women could be seduced and carried off in a country celebrated for the strictness of the late ruler on this point,' stirred the popular sympathy with the chiefs who kicked against a rule which curtailed their cherished freedom and gave them nothing tangible in return.

In September, 1841, Nott himself was marching through the country north-west of Kandahár, with a force strong enough to overawe resistance and to compel the submission of many hostile chiefs. One bold Durání, Akram Khán, still refused to come in. Guided by an Afghán traitor, Captain John Conolly, one of the Sháh's officers, surprised the Khán in his own quarters, and carried him off to Kandahár. The news of his capture aroused in the Envoy those savage instincts which still lurk beneath the coat of modern civilization. The Sháh, he said, had always been too lenient; a terrible example must now be made; and so this naughty boy, whose real crime was his inconvenient patriotism, was blown away by Prince Timúr's orders from a gun [1]. The Nemesis of wrong and violence was already dogging the steps of our countrymen in Afghánistán. For

'Revenge and wrong bring forth their kind;'

and the Afgháns were soon to repay with heavy interest all that they had suffered at our hands.

For the moment, however, nothing disturbed Mac-

[1] Kaye.

naghten's peace of mind. His schemes for tightening our hold upon Herát had ended, as we saw, in total failure. Two English envoys, Stoddart and Conolly, were languishing in hopeless bondage at Bokhára. Aktar Khán was still at large, and Dost Muhammad's ablest son, Akbar, had found shelter in the highlands of Kúlum. But for the moment there was no enemy in the open field. The Russians had been scared from attempting to invade Khíva; 'the noses of the Duráni chiefs had been brought to the grindstone,' and Afghánistán was 'as quiet as an Indian district.' In Kábul itself, while the Sháh lay tossing on his bed with fever, troubled with thoughts of his half-fledged royalty, our countrymen were enjoying the cool sunshine of a bracing October in the high mountain valley on which their cantonment stood. Most of the married men had been joined by their wives and families, as if Kábul were already an Indian station. The Envoy himself was eagerly awaiting the hour when he should transfer his charge to Burnes, and turn his back for ever on the scene of his late achievements.

Even then the breath of a new calamity was blowing towards him from an unexpected quarter. Looking out for all possible sources of retrenchment, Lord Auckland had impressed upon his Envoy the urgent need of reducing the outlay on Sháh Shujá's administrative wants. The salaries of his ministers and civil officers were cut down with the Sháh's consent. To touch the subsidies hitherto paid out of the Indian

Treasury to a number of Afghán chiefs in lieu of their former blackmail, was a hazard which Macnaghten shrank from incurring. But in spite of his remonstrances, the Governor-General insisted that all such payments should thenceforth be settled by the Sháh himself, for he had been long enough supported by British funds. Burnes also had pressed the Envoy hard in the same direction. In the last days of September Macnaghten summoned the chiefs of the Eastern Ghilzai tribes to Kábul, and bade them look to Sháh Shujá for the future payment of their subsidies on a reduced scale befitting their sovereign's present needs. The chiefs listened without a sign of dissent, salaamed to the Envoy, and went off to plunder a caravan at Tazín, and to block up the passes between Kábul and Jalálábád. In a few days they were busy plotting with their fellow-sufferers in the Kohistán, in the Kháibar Hills, and in Kábul itself, against a Government which could not keep its word[1].

Macnaghten took the matter lightly enough. The outbreak, he thought, might easily be quelled by the troops returning to India under Sir Robert Sale. He spoke of 'the impudence of a few hundred rascals,' who blocked the way through a pass within fifteen miles of Kábul. It annoyed him that such a breeze should ruffle the peace of the country he was about to leave; but he felt sure that, this little outbreak once quelled, Afghánistán would become quieter than

[1] Lawrence; Durand.

ever before. And yet he knew that many Afgháns were leaving the city to join the insurgents, and he declared that Hamza Khán, the Governor of Kábul, whom the Sháh sent off at his suggestion to pacify the Ghilzai chiefs, was himself 'at the bottom of the whole conspiracy[1].' Pottinger warned him of mischief brewing in the Kohistán. The story of Captain Gray's perilous mountain-ride from Kábul to Laghmán, in the care of a friendly chief who warned him that the Afgháns were 'determined to murder or drive out every Farangí in the country,' would have furnished most men with food for anxious thought. But nothing seemed to shake his belief in the trivial and transient character of the Ghilzai revolt. On the 9th of October one native regiment of Sale's brigade, under Colonel Monteath, marched off from Kábul on its return to India, as if the road was perfectly clear. On that very night Monteath's camp at Butkhák was attacked by a body of Ghilzais. Next day Monteath was joined by the rest of Sale's brigade, whose leader had just been ordered to clear the passes beyond Butkhák.

After fighting his way on the 12th through the rocks and boulders of the Khúrd Kábul, Sale left Monteath to watch that pass from the valley beyond, while he himself returned with his main body to Butkhák. During his absence Monteath's brave Sepoys of the 35th encountered and repelled a murderous night-attack from a host of Afgháns, many of whom had just been allowed by Macgregor, the political

[1] *Papers Relating to Afghanistan* (1843).

agent, to encamp beside our troops as friends. With fresh reinforcements from Kábul, Sale hurried back on the 20th to rejoin Monteath. Two days later the whole brigade threaded its way through the steep defiles of the Haft Kotal, with very little fighting, into the valley of Tazín. At that moment Sale's strong force might have dealt a crushing blow at the mass of insurgents within easy reach of it. But the fatal error of divided authority was to nip Sale's purpose in the bud. The gallant Dennie was on the point of leading his guns and infantry to the attack, when a messenger from the enemy came in to treat for terms with the political agent. Sale was induced to countermand the attack, while Macgregor and the Ghilzai chiefs settled the terms of an arrangement which satisfied Macgregor's conscience and saved the chiefs from imminent disaster at Dennie's hands. In return for their promises which meant nothing, and for a few hostages of no particular value, their former stipends were to be restored, nor was any chief to be held accountable for robberies committed outside his own bounds[1].

In spite of these concessions, Sale's onward march to Gandamak was harassed by several attacks from the mountaineers whose chiefs had just been renewing their allegiance; and his rearguard sustained heavy losses in men and baggage before they issued from the gloomy gorges of Jagdalak. Sale's brigade reached Gandamak on the 30th of October. His last brush

[1] Durand; Kaye.

with the Ghilzais Macnaghten took for 'the expiring effort of the rebels.' The same rosy hopefulness tinged his view of things at Kábul and in the Kohistán. The Kohistáni rebels would 'sneak into their holes again' now that the Ghilzais were quieted, and all was tranquil on the side of Kandahár. John Conolly, Colin Mackenzie, and several other officers in the Sháh's service sought to open the Envoy's eyes to the mischief brewing within the Sháh's own capital. Burnes also, whose house was in the city, had been warned of the plots around him by Mohan Lál, the Munshí who had long filled a place of special trust on the Envoy's staff. But Burnes, like Macnaghten, was too engrossed in thoughts of the good time coming to heed the danger signals waved before his feet.

On the evening of the 1st of November Burnes congratulated Macnaghten on his leaving the country in a state of profound peace. That very night a number of Afghán Sirdárs met together in Kábul to arrange for a general rising against the accursed Farangís, who treated them as dirt and their women as mere harlots. One of the leading plotters was Amínulla Khán, hitherto deemed a staunch friend of the English. Foremost among the speakers was Abdulla Khán, who had lost his lands during the new rule, and was smarting under the insults lately offered him by Sir Alexander Burnes. To call an Afghán chief a dog, and to threaten him with the loss of his ears, was an offence which could only be wiped out in blood. The assembled chiefs agreed to this man's proposal

that Burnes himself should be made the first victim of an outbreak planned for the next morning, the anniversary of Parwándarra.

Next to the house of the Envoy-Elect was that which contained the Shah's Treasury, under the charge of Paymaster Captain Johnson, who happened that night to be sleeping in cantonments. Each house was protected by a small Sepoy guard. The Treasury looked out upon a narrow street, half a mile distant from the Bálá Hissár. Burnes lived in the city for reasons which chiefly concerned himself. The plunder of the Treasury would hold out a sufficient bribe to the men employed in wreaking Afghán vengeance on the enemy next door. 'To kill Burnes and to sack the Treasury'—argues Durand—'was to open the revolt in a manner that would silence the timid or wavering, feed the thirst for gold, and compromise all irrevocably. It was to open the insurrection in the city of Kábul with imposing success.'

About 7 a.m. on the 2nd of November Captain George Lawrence had just returned to the Residency from his early morning walk, when a servant came up breathless to tell him that the streets of Kábul were filled with armed men, who surrounded the houses of Sir A. Burnes and Captain Johnson. An hour later Lawrence found the Envoy engaged in earnest talk with Elphinstone and some officers of his staff. 'On coming in, Sir William placed a note from Burnes in my hand, begging for aid, as from a tumult in the city he feared his house might be attacked.' Lawrence

advised the despatch of a regiment thither without delay, in order to help Burnes and attempt the capture of Amínulla and Abdulla Khán. This bold but wise suggestion being scouted as insane, Lawrence urged that Shelton's force should march at once from the Siyá Sang lines to the Bálá Hissár, whence they could act as circumstances required. This proposal was accepted; but instead of marching forthwith, as Lawrence wanted, the Brigadier was ordered merely to hold himself ready for moving forward whenever the Sháh might request him to do so. Lawrence himself, with a small escort, rode off at speed to the citadel. After some narrow escapes from Afghán swords and bullets, he entered the Sháh's presence, and learned that some of his Majesty's troops with two guns had already gone off to quell the riot in the city [1].

Meanwhile Burnes was paying the penalty of his own self-confidence and Elphinstone's inertness. Before dawn of that fatal day he had been awakened by a friendly Afghán, who told him of a plot against his life, and vainly urged him to a timely flight. Presently Uzmán Khán, the Sháh's chief minister, repeated the same tale and pressed him with the same counsel. Still the Envoy-Elect would not budge, though the roar of a great tumult even then reached his ears. He contented himself with writing to Macnaghten for help in terms which made light of the danger at his doors. And he sent to Abdulla Khán a conciliatory message,

[1] Lawrence.

to which no answer was ever returned. Ere long an angry mob was surging before his house. Some of the insurgents attacked the Treasury, while others set fire to Burnes's stables. Hoping for speedy relief from some quarter, and knowing that other lives than his were staked on the issue, Burnes restrained his Sepoy guards from firing, while he harangued the mob from an upper balcony. Their only answer was a yell of defiance, mingled with fierce demands for his blood and that of his two companions, his brother Charles and young Broadfoot. Shots were soon flying about, the assailants pressed forward in ever-increasing numbers; and soon the English officers and their faithful Sepoys were fighting desperately for their lives.

The first to fall in the unequal struggle was the brave William Broadfoot, brother of him who, just a year earlier, had died the soldier's death at Parwándarra. It was now past eight o'clock, and still no help came either from cantonments or the Bálá Hissár. Once more Burnes addressed the rioters, promising them a large bribe to spare his brother's life and his own. They only bade him come down into the garden. At last the two brothers, disguised as natives, were lured outside by a treacherous Kashmírí, who had sworn to guide them to a place of safety. He kept his oath by shouting out the name of 'Sikandar Burnes.' The mob, led by one of their *mullahs*, rushed upon the hapless pair, who fell cut to pieces by the long sharp Afghán knives. Every soul in the two

houses was slaughtered; the Treasury was sacked, and both buildings were set on fire [1].

Thus perished in his prime, with his hand upon the prize for which he had long been hungering, the first conspicuous victim of the frantic policy which he had once so strenuously opposed. 'It was'—says Kaye —'the hard fate of Alexander Burnes to be overrated at the outset and underrated at the close of his career.' A man of bright talents, immense energy, and high ambition, with a quick, mercurial nature, that touched in one moment the extremest chords of hope and despondency, he was evidently wanting in steadiness of purpose, sound judgement, and moral self-restraint. When the Russians were about to march on Khíva, his lively fancy swelled their numbers to the absurd total of 25,000 men with eighty guns. For the past three years he had been almost a cipher at the Sháh's Court, wasting his time in criticisms and suggestions, to which Macnaghten gave very little heed. And yet he had managed somehow to become the worst-hated Englishman in Afghánistán.

But how happened it that no help came to Burnes at such a moment even from the Bálá Hissár? The failure was owing, not to the Sháh himself, but to the commander who, of two roads open to him, had taken that which wound through all the most crowded thoroughfares in Kábul. His troops and guns made slow progress through the narrow winding streets of a populous city, and before they reached their goal they

[1] Kaye; Thornton.

were assailed by bodies of insurgents, who drove them back with heavy loss into the citadel. By that time Burnes had fallen, the Treasury had been sacked, and the shops of friendly Hindus gutted; while the blaze of burning houses, the firing of matchlocks, and the yells of mobs intent on plunder and violence told how thoroughly the insurgents were doing their work. As the day wore on, the excitement spread throughout the city. Sturt, the Engineer, on his way from Shelton's camp, was badly wounded near the Sháh's own palace; and the chiefs who had planned the outbreak and prudently stayed at home all that morning, with their horses saddled ready for flight, now ventured to show themselves in public, as men whose safety was well assured.

All this happened while 5,000 good fighting-men lay idle within easy reach of the insurgent city. The timely march of a single regiment would have saved three English officers from a violent death, and stamped out the little fire which grew by sufferance into a wide conflagration. Macnaghten told Elphinstone that he 'did not think much' of the outbreak, which would soon subside. Elphinstone's orders to the commander of the force encamped on the heights of Siyá Sang were obeyed to the letter by Shelton, who sent part of his troops back to cantonments, and waited with the rest for the needful summons from the Bálá Hissár. He reached the citadel about noon, in time to cover the retreat of the Sháh's troops. Beyond exchanging shots with the enemy's marks-

men, and allowing his guns to be dragged into a good position, he made no effort to stem the growing insurrection, although the Sháh himself asked more than once why our troops were not moving forward. In vain did Lawrence urge him to march at once into the city. 'My force,' he answered, 'is inadequate, and you don't appear to know what street-firing is.' To the amazed annoyance both of Lawrence and the Sháh, he stood there inert and paralyzed, while the work of rapine and destruction went on below, and two brave officers, Trevor and Mackenzie, with a handful of resolute followers, were defending their isolated posts in the city against swarms of assailants, armed with long *jazails* or matchlocks, which carried much further than the muskets of our Sepoys [1].

[1] Lawrence; Kaye; Eyre's *Kabul Insurrection*.

CHAPTER X

The Nemesis of Wrong-doing

Every hour of impunity for the rioters of the 2nd of November gave new strength and wider purpose to the insurrection, of which that day's outbreak was but a local symptom. Next morning hundreds of armed Afghâns flocked into Kâbul from the surrounding villages. Even then the least display of prompt energy on our part might have arrested the progress of armed revolt. That very morning, in swift compliance with a message received the day before, the 37th Sepoys, under Major Griffiths, marched into cantonments from the Khurd Kâbul valley, having fought their way through the passes with brilliant success and very trifling loss against frequent attacks from several thousand Ghilzais. The Kazilbâsh quarter of the city, peopled by descendants of Nâdir Shâh's Persian followers, still held aloof from the rebels, nor had the Bárakzâi clansmen, in the absence of Akbar Khân, as yet decided to join the revolt. But this day also wore through without one successful effort to change the face of affairs. Three companies of infantry indeed, with two light guns, under

Major Swayne, were sent off towards the Lahore Gate of the city, to try and effect a junction with a part of Shelton's force; but the attempt, begun with vigour, miscarried half-way, in the face of a numerous and well-armed foe, and of Shelton's failure to co-operate from the Bálá Hissár. 'The day,' says Lawrence, 'was frittered away in endless discussions and abortive proposals.' No attempt was even made to secure the two forts which lay between cantonments and the fort which held the whole of our commissariat stores. Nor was a foot moved in aid of Mackenzie, who had been left in charge of a commissariat depôt for the Sháh[1].

It is easy of course to be wise after the event, and large allowance may be made for Elphinstone in the first hours of a crisis which his political colleague had led him to regard as of little consequence. 'As brave a gentleman'—says Durand—'as ever fought under his country's colours,' Elphinstone was now enfeebled in mind as well as body by a painful chronic disease; and the outbreak had found him preparing, at his own request, to resign a command for which he felt himself entirely unfitted. Instead of acting upon his own judgement, which was generally good, the kindly, courteous old gentleman turned to others for advice, floundered in a maze of jarring opinions, and let himself, in the words of Lady Sale, be 'swayed by the last speaker.' Major Thain, one of the best officers on his staff, soon desisted from offering advice which

[1] Kaye; Durand; Lawrence; Eyre.

his chief was certain in the long run not to follow. Even when Elphinstone's better judgement prompted him to do the right thing, a word from some one else would lead him astray. On this 3rd of November, he proposed to ensure the safety of the commissariat stores by placing a garrison in Muhammad Sherif's Fort. But Macnaghten objected to the 'policy' of such a move, and that night the fort was occupied by Afghán matchlock-men, who thus commanded both the south-west corner of cantonments and the road thence of 400 yards to the Commissariat Fort [1].

By this time also it should have been obvious to the dullest intellect that nothing could be gained by keeping Elphinstone's force in a position utterly unsuited for a prolonged defence. The oblong intrenchment, with its low wall and narrow ditch, commanded on all sides by hills, forts, and villages, and with its food-supplies a quarter of a mile off, was little better than a death-trap in the face of a national uprising. 'It must always remain a wonder'—wrote Sir Vincent Eyre, who did good service during this period—'that any Government, or any officer or set of officers, who had either science or experience, should, in a half-conquered country, fix their forces in so extraordinary and injudicious a military position.' The Chief Engineer with Pollock's Avenging Army, Sir Frederic Abbot, might well deem it 'a matter of surprise that our military authorities did not throw themselves into the Bálá Hissár; a movement that

[1] Eyre; Kaye.

might have been effected with little loss at any period of the siege.' This, indeed, was the course which Sturt, the Engineer, backed by many of his comrades, had recommended from the outset, and which the Sháh himself was known to desire. Within that fortress our troops could easily have held out for months, until help came from Pesháwar or from Sind. It was Vincent Eyre's firm belief that a timely movement into the citadel would have given us secure possession of Kábul itself. The risks involved in such a movement were as nothing compared with the obvious advantages.

This plan, however, found no favour with the military chiefs, whose puerile objections overbore the Envoy's earlier leanings towards Sturt's side. Shelton, an old soldier who had marched and fought under Moore and Wellington, and borne his part in the first Burmese war, could see at least that anything was better than sitting still in a weak ill-manned intrenchment; but he could think of nothing better than a speedy retreat on Jalálábád. Such a step, if promptly taken, might have averted a terrible disaster and saved our arms from untold disgrace. But Macnaghten resolutely set his face against any movement which involved the possible desertion of his good friend, the Sháh. Both he and Elphinstone had sent urgent messages to Sale at Gandamak for the help which Sale would not or could not give. Despairing of succour from that quarter, he wrote to Elphinstone on the 18th of November, that a retreat should be

ordered only in the last extremity, and that we should 'hold on here as long as possible, and throughout the winter, if we can only subsist the troops by any means.' The Envoy, like Micawber, still hopes that 'something may turn up in our favour.' 'Nott, perhaps, may be sending up reinforcements from Kandahár, and as winter is so near, most of the Afgháns will very soon disperse to their own homes [1].'

The question of subsistence had been settled in effect on the 5th of November, when Ensign Warren brought his men out of the beleaguered commissariat fort, just as some troops were mustering in cantonments for his relief. Two attempts to reach him on the day before had been badly repulsed by the fire from Muhammad Sheríf's fort and the adjacent Sháh-Bágh, or King's Garden. The anger caused by Warren's reappearance was inflamed by the spectacle of an Afghán rabble swarming into the abandoned post, and carrying off the large stores of wheat, flour, medicines, rum, tents, and clothing—worth at least £40,000 —on which our troops depended for the very means of holding their ground. Two days' supply of food was all that remained to them. By this time Trevor and Mackenzie had been forced by want of water and ammunition to abandon the posts they had held so obstinately for three days. On this day also the enemy's triumph was crowned by the failure of our first attempt to capture Muhammad Sheríf's Fort.

Next day, the 6th, the attempt was renewed with

[1] Kaye; *Afghan Papers*, 1843.

full success by a body of troops under the gallant Griffiths. This was followed by a good deal of brilliant but desultory fighting, in which our soldiers of all arms proved their mettle against an active and ubiquitous foe. But the net result revealed no traces of concerted action for a common end. Individual officers, like Eyre, Sturt, Mackenzie, Griffiths, did their duty well and nobly, whenever they got the chance. But the men whose rank betokened leadership did not lead. They merely wrangled or did nothing. As Colonel Malleson has pithily remarked, 'there was in fact no command.'

No change for the better took place when Elphinstone, at Macnaghten's urgent entreaty, recalled Shelton and his troops on the 9th from the Bálá Hissár. The Envoy himself, who had been a soldier before he obtained a 'writership' in the Bengal Civil Service, still showed something of a soldier's energy and forecast in the hour of danger. He had lost no time in urging the recall of Sale's brigade and the despatch of Nott's Bengal troops from Kandahár. Had his advice been promptly taken, the commissariat stores would have been saved, and all the difficulties arising from their loss would have been avoided. He hoped, of course, that the presence of Brigadier Shelton would infuse new spirit into the conduct of the defence. The troops were on half-rations, but thanks to Macnaghten's energy, supplies could still be bought from the neighbouring villages, although the disgraceful capture of our stores had turned numbers of neutral

Afghâns into active foes. But his hopes of aid from Shelton were doomed to early disappointment. Shelton was very soon at odds both with the Envoy, whose advice on military matters he angrily scouted, and with Elphinstone, whose timid vacillations filled him with intense disgust. Instead of giving his second-in-command a free hand at such a crisis, the invalid General found fault with Shelton for acting without reference to his own wishes, complained of his stubborn contumacy, and petulantly reminded him that he himself was still in command.

In such circumstances everything was sure to go wrong. Divided counsels, embittered by service jealousies, took all heart and clear purpose out of the military plans. The lives of our soldiers were frittered away, their energies wasted, their discipline destroyed in feeble, dilatory, ill-managed efforts to retrieve past blunders, or to recover lost ground. On the very day after Shelton's arrival, an attack in force was ordered against a fort which commanded the north-east angle of cantonments. The troops under Shelton himself were ready and eager for the fray, when Elphinstone thought fit to countermand a movement for whose success Macnaghten had engaged to answer. Two hours later Elphinstone changed his mind, and again ordered the advance. Meanwhile the enemy had gained time to strengthen their position with men and guns. The fort was carried after more than one repulse, at a heavy cost to the victors, who a few hours earlier would have done their work more

thoroughly with far lighter risk. In this and two or three smaller forts a large store of grain was found, but, owing to the lateness of the hour, little more than half of it could be secured[1].

To Macnaghten also it was owing that Shelton on the 13th was enabled to dislodge a strong body of insurgents, posted with two guns on the western heights near the village of Bemárú. Delayed for some hours by Elphinstone's dawdling and Shelton's perverseness, the advance began after 3 p.m. After some sharp fighting, in which friend and foe got mixed together, and the Afghán horse charged through and through our infantry, the enemy fled, losing both their guns.

That sunset gleam of transient success ushered in a long night of disaster and despair. Thenceforth nothing prospered with the doomed force cantoned in the Kábul valley. The Envoy kept on hoping, counselling, scheming by means of bribes to sow dissension among the insurgent leaders. By the middle of November Sale, instead of returning, as he might then have done, to Kábul, had marched on to Jalálábád. His reasons for a step which, in Durand's opinion, was the worst he could have taken, did more credit to the prudence of the commander than to the generous instincts of the man[2]. The question, however, bristled with difficulties, and Sale may have underrated the imbecility which reigned at Kábul. The next blow to the Envoy's hopes came from the side of Kandahár.

[1] Eyre; Kaye. [2] *Afghan Blue-Book*, 1843.

Maclaren's brigade set out indeed on its long and difficult march to Kábul; but the snow was already falling in the last days of November about Khelát-i-Ghilzai, and Maclaren not unwillingly retraced his steps. The only fresh arrival in the Kábul intrenchment was that of Pottinger and Haughton, both badly wounded, with one Gúrkha Sepoy, who alone, out of several hundred fighting-men, had made good their escape from Chárikár in the Kohistán.

On the 22nd of November the enemy once more occupied the heights of Bemárú, as well as the village which had lately furnished our sole supplies. A futile effort to dislodge them was followed up in the dark of the next morning by a bolder movement in greater force. But the right moment for storming the village was lost through Shelton's obstinacy; the storming party mistook their way; the infantry were exposed in two squares to a withering matchlock fire, under which the ill-placed cavalry also fell fast, and our single gun became unserviceable. The enemy, reinforced by thousands of Ghází fanatics, renewed the still doubtful fight with resistless fury, retook the gun which had once been rescued, and drove our troops before them in hopeless rout. A mingled mass of fugitives and pursuers swept down the hill towards cantonments; and the broken remnants of Shelton's force were saved from annihilation only by the act of one friendly chief, Usmán Khán, who suddenly recalled his own followers from the pursuit[1].

[1] Eyre; Lawrence. See especially Eyre's account of the fight, with his 'Observations,' and extracts from Lady Sale's *Journal*.

Three hundred men, with some of our best officers, fell on that disastrous day. Not a few deeds of heroic daring and calm self-sacrifice light up the dismal records of that crowning failure, and Shelton himself was always in the thickest of the fight. But no amount of personal courage could work a miracle in the absence of a clear directing brain. Even discipline availed little against far superior numbers, skilfully led, and expert in handling weapons much deadlier than our smooth-bore muskets. The unwisdom of our leaders had broken down the spirit of their men, already unnerved by cold, hunger, and the daily duties involved in the mere defence of a weak and wide intrenchment begirt by numerous and watchful foes. To employ such troops in the field again under such leadership became impossible. Had some of the younger officers only dared to take the leadership into their own hands, the honour of our arms and the safety of an imperilled garrison would even then have been assured, while the breach of discipline would have been gladly justified by an admiring nation. But the deed of happy daring was never done at Kábul, though something like it was afterwards achieved at Jalálábád.

Once more the question of a retreat into the Bálá Hissár was mooted, at the instance of the Sháh himself, who had been daily watching through his telescope the movements in the plain below. 'Surely the English are mad!' he had exclaimed on witnessing the capture of the Commissariat Fort. Since then he

had seen evidence enough of their madness to sharpen his own anxieties for the future. But the English, or at least their military leaders, had not yet come to their right mind; and Macnaghten, once more bowing to their decision, began to look kindly on Elphinstone's proposal to seek by negotiation the deliverance which our arms had failed to win. For a fortnight past, indeed, his agents in Kábul and the Bálá Hissár had been scattering gold and promises among those Afgháns whose patriotism had not yet overcome their prudence or their greed. One of these agents, Mohan Lál, had offered a large reward for the heads of the leaders concerned in the outbreak of the 2nd of November. This appears to have been done against the wishes of Macnaghten himself, who had always declared his abhorrence of such 'unlawful means' for destroying malefactors whom he would gladly have consigned to the lawful hangman.

In reply to overtures received from Kábul, where the fiery Muhammad Akbar now took the lead among his fellow-chiefs, the Envoy began to treat for terms consistent with the national honour. Nothing came of the conference held by him on the 27th with two deputies from the hostile chiefs. The chiefs would accept nothing short of a surrender at discretion, and they repeated their demands with added emphasis in a letter received by the Envoy next morning. He could only reply that 'we preferred death to dishonour, and that it would remain for a higher power to decide between us.' Once more Macnaghten urged

the General to prepare for a movement into the Bálá Hissár, or else to make one bold determined effort to replenish the fast dwindling stock of food. Elphinstone and Shelton alike rejected his proposals, and pressed him all the more earnestly to make the best terms he could with the Afghán leaders. In the first days of December the enemy were allowed to destroy a bridge spanning the river between cantonments and the citadel, and to retake Muhammad Sheríf's fort, even though the men, who had just abandoned it, volunteered to go and win it back [1].

By the 10th of December the Envoy knew that his last hope of succour from Nott's garrison lay dead, and that no entreaties could move his military colleagues even to attempt a march on the Bálá Hissár. They only insisted on the need of negotiating a safe retreat to Jalálábád or Pesháwar. With a heavy heart he consented to do their bidding. On the following day he conferred with Akbar and his fellow-chiefs on the terms of a draft treaty which recanted every item of the policy proclaimed in the Manifesto of 1838. He engaged to withdraw all our troops and establishments as speedily as possible from Afghánistán, and to send back Dost Muhammad and all other Afgháns then detained in India. Sháh Shujá was to have the option of remaining in Kábul or returning to India with our troops. The Afgháns on their part were to furnish all needful supplies and carriage, to respect all property that might be left behind, to refrain

[1] Lawrence; Eyre; Kaye.

from molesting our friends or those of the Sháh; and to treat with all honour and respect any of our people who might for the present be unable to come away. While Macnaghten was reading out these terms, Akbar broke in with the impatient query, 'Why should you not march to-morrow?' After long discussion, the Envoy's proposals were substantially accepted, the chiefs agreeing to furnish the supplies, while Macnaghten undertook to quit cantonments in three days. Hostages were exchanged, and the conference broke up, says Lawrence, 'with mutual assurances of friendship and good faith.'

The arrangement was duly notified to the Sháh, and steps were taken for withdrawing the Bengal troops from the Bálá Hissár. As things stood, a timely retreat from Kábul might still have saved the lives of a helpless garrison, if not the honour of the British name. But a large store of grain was somehow left behind in the citadel, while Elphinstone's men and cattle were on the verge of starving. The promised supplies came in very slowly or were plundered by the way. Delays resulting, whether from accident or design, gave each of the contracting parties a handle for complaint, for mutual mistrust, for fresh demands on one side, and for vain remonstrances and poor subterfuges on the other. Three days passed, and our people were still shivering in their intrenchment. The few forts still held by us had to be surrendered before the Afgháns would send in any more supplies. On the 20th they demanded the surrender

of our nine-pounder guns. By that time the snow began to fall steadily, and the last hopes of a safe retreat were fast vanishing. Sháh Shujá could not make up his mind either to leave the country with his English friends, or to make his peace with the turbulent Kháns, who offered to acknowledge him as king, if he would cease to treat them as his inferiors, and would marry his daughters to them or their sons. The camp-followers were living on carrion, and the horses eating their own dung.

Sturt, the brave and trusty Engineer, now urged the General to break off the treaty and cut his own way to Jalálábád. Macnaghten at one moment implored the military chiefs to march at any cost into the citadel, at another he called upon the Ghilzai and Kazilbásh leaders to rally round the Sháh and his allies. His desperate efforts to save the last shreds of his country's honour plunged him into courses which compromised his own. Which way he turned was hell; and the final exodus was fixed for the 22nd of December. Still clutching at any pretext for delaying or evading the stroke of doom, he instructed the wily Mohan Lál to bribe the Ghilzai and Kazilbásh chiefs into sending him supplies of grain, and making their salaams of fealty to Sháh Shujá. In the event of their taking the bait, he would no longer keep his promise to withdraw from Afghánistán [1].

Such was the plain English of letters couched in more diplomatic phrases. Macnaghten's better nature

[1] Kaye.

had become, like the dyer's hand, subdued to what it worked in. By this time orders for the withdrawal of their garrisons had been despatched to our commanders at Kandahár, Ghazní, and Jalálábád. Of all the confederate leaders Muhammad Akbar had hitherto shown himself the least slippery. For an Afghán, indeed, who had so many reasons to hate our countrymen, he had kept fairly true to the tenour of his agreement, and had dared much to enforce the same duty on his less manageable friends. Unpleasant rumours, which deepened his own suspicions of foul play, now led him to test the Envoy's good faith by a process which would leave no room for further doubt.

On the evening of the 22nd—for the troops had not stirred—two of his trustiest followers bore to Macnaghten a message intended for his private ear. Akbar proposed to form a league with the English and the Ghilzas for maintaining Sháh Shujá on his throne. He himself was to be installed as the Sháh's Wazír and to receive from us a pension of four lakhs a year, with a bonus of thirty lakhs, or £300,000. Our troops were to aid him in capturing Aminulla Khán, the chief who had prompted the attack on Burnes. For a certain sum of money, Akbar engaged to send that ruffian's head as a present to the Envoy. This last proposal Macnaghten at once declined. It was against the custom of his country to pay a price for blood. In return for compliance with these conditions, the British troops would be free to retire

with honour to their own country in the following spring.

The bait was tempting, and Macnaghten swallowed it without a scruple. His mind unhinged by all that he had suffered in the past six weeks, he cared little for the danger or the discredit of playing off one treacherous Afghán against another, so long as there remained a chance of saving from utter ruin the interests committed to his charge. He put his signature to a paper written by himself in Persian, expressing his general consent to Akbar's project. With this in their safe keeping the messengers sped back to Kábul.

In signing that paper he had signed his own death-warrant. Akbar's suspicions became a certainty. At noon of the next day, the 23rd, Macnaghten, accompanied by his faithful squires, Lawrence, Trevor, and Mackenzie, rode forth to confer with the Bárakzái leader on the snow-crusted plain between cantonments and the Siyá Sang hills. On first learning the nature of his Chief's errand, Mackenzie had pronounced the whole thing a plot. 'A plot!' cried the Envoy; 'Trust me for that!' To Elphinstone's dissuasions he had replied by offering to bear his part in one bold onset of all the garrison against their foes. 'I am sure we shall beat them; but as for these negotiations, I have no faith in them.' The General could only shake his head, declaring that his troops were no longer to be trusted, but promising to hold some of them in readiness for an advance at need on

the Bálá Hissár. When Lawrence expressed his fears of treachery, Macnaghten owned that treachery of course there was, but what else could he do? The General had declared himself powerless to fight. There was no hope of aid from any quarter, the enemy were only playing with us, and not one article of the treaty had they fulfilled. 'The life I have led for the last six weeks you know well, and, rather than be disgraced and live it over again, I would risk a hundred deaths. Success will save our honour, and more than make up for all risks.'

As they rode out of cantonments, followed by a small escort, Sir William remarked with wonder on the absence of all arrangements for his support. 'But it is of a piece with all the rest,' he added bitterly. On the top of a low hillock sat Akbar himself on horseback, surrounded by a group of his Sirdárs, while a crowd of armed Afgháns filled up the background. This spot was about 300 yards from the intrenchment. After an exchange of friendly greetings, Akbar proposed to dismount, and the two parties were soon seated on the further slope of the mound. A number of armed Afgháns stood near, but these, said Akbar, were all in the secret, and the Sáhibs need not be afraid. 'Scarcely were the words uttered,' says Lawrence, 'when my pistols were snatched from my waist, my sword drawn from the scabbard, and my arms pinioned by Muhammad Sháh Khán, who raised me up from the ground, saying, "If you value your life come along with me".' At that moment he saw

the Envoy, horror-stricken, struggling to rise, his wrists locked in the grasp of Muhammad Akbar himself. Maddened either by the fierceness of the struggle or perhaps by the Envoy's angry taunts, Akbar shot him through the body with one of the pistols which Macnaghten had given him a few hours before. Meanwhile Trevor and Mackenzie had both, like Lawrence, been seized and pinioned; and each of the three was placed on horseback behind one of his captors, who bore him off at speed over the frozen snow towards a neighbouring fort. Bands of furious Afgháns, armed with swords, guns, or bludgeons, pressed upon the horsemen, yelling for the blood of the *Káfirs*, and aiming at them blows which sometimes hit their mark. Lawrence and Mackenzie got through their perilous ride without serious hurt, but Trevor, slipping off his horse, was cut to pieces by the long Afghán knives [1].

The body of the murdered Envoy was hacked in pieces by the exulting Gházís, who bore his remains in triumph through the streets of Kábul, and set up his head in the Chár Chauk, the great central bazaar of the city. That the murder was unpremeditated there is every reason to believe. Akbar had laid a trap for the Envoy, but his object was to confirm his own ascendency among the Afghán leaders, and to carry off the Sháh's English Minister as a living guarantee for his own father's restoration and the deliverance of his country from foreign rule. One of

[1] Lawrence; Eyre; Kaye.

those gusts of wild rage, to which his fiery nature was prone, had driven him to slay the man whose life, a moment later, he would have given much to preserve. Be that as it may, there remains the undoubted fact that Macnaghten paid by a violent death the penalty of his rash attempt to fight the Afghâns with their own weapons of deceit and double-dealing. While still professing his intention to carry out a treaty which had been broken as much by our delays as by Afghân shiftiness, he had sought to detach, first the Ghilzai chiefs, and then Muhammad Akbar, from an engagement made with the whole confederacy. Lawrence, Mackenzie, and others who knew him best, could find no other excuse for their friend's shortcoming than the fact that 'two months of incessant fatigue of mind and body, and the load of care which had during that time weighed him down, had at last completely unhinged his strong mind[1].'

The murder of our Envoy and the seizure of his companions took place within a few hundred yards of an intrenchment occupied by 4,500 British troops. His native escort had fled back on the first alarm. Several officers had witnessed the attack, and one at least had seen the murderers hacking at the Envoy's corpse. There was much excitement in the garrison, and one poor lady, the Envoy's widow, who had an instinctive dread of Afghân treachery, remained all day in agonized suspense. But not a hand was raised to rescue the supposed captives or to avenge their

[1] Captain Mackenzie's *Statement*, quoted by Kaye, vol. ii.

fate. The military commanders refused to believe that any harm had befallen the Envoy's party. When the truth became publicly known on the 24th, they requested Major Eldred Pottinger, scarcely yet recovered from his wounds, to take up the dropped threads of Macnaghten's diplomacy, and to treat upon the amended terms which Akbar had just sent in. At the council held that evening with Elphinstone and three of his senior officers, Pottinger besought his colleagues to reject all terms with a faithless enemy, and hold out to the last in the Bálá Hissár, or else cut their way to Jalálábád. But the Council of War had no mind to risk either venture, and Pottinger proceeded to act in compliance with their demands.

The new clauses in the amended treaty bargained for the surrender of all our guns except six field-pieces, of all spare arms and ammunition, of all the coin in the public treasury, and for the payment of all the sums of money which Macnaghten was said to have promised to certain of the Afghán leaders. Six hostages were also required. The surrender of the married men with their families was not then pressed; but, short of this, there was no humiliation which our hapless countrymen had not to endure [1].

On the 29th, Lawrence, who had been kindly treated by his captors, and finally set free by Aminulla himself, came into cantonments and drew up bills for twelve lakhs and a half on the Indian Treasury. On the arrival of the new hostages,

[1] Kaye.

Mackenzie also was released, along with Captain Skinner, who had escaped by a happy chance from the massacres of the 2nd of November.

On the first day of the new year, 1842, the ratified treaty, bearing the seals of eighteen chiefs, was placed in Pottinger's hands. By that time the guns, muskets, and ordnance stores had all been given up. Preparations for retreat went dismally forward, amid scenes of wild disorder and outrages which Shelton declined to check. Snow fell heavily from time to time, and our half-starved, ill-clad Sepoys suffered cruelly from the unaccustomed cold. Frequent warnings from Sháh Shujá and other friends in Kábul failed to move the military chiefs from their fixed purpose. The Sháh offered the English ladies an asylum in his citadel. On the strength of this offer Pottinger and Lawrence entreated Elphinstone to march his force straight into the Bálá Hissár. 'But can you guarantee us supplies?' asked the General. Of course they could guarantee nothing of the kind. 'No, we retreat,' said Elphinstone; and the order was issued for a march next morning towards Jalálábád[1].

About nine on the morning of January 6, the sick and wounded having all been safely lodged in the Bálá Hissár, the vanguard of a force still reckoned at 4,500 men was led out by Brigadier Anquetil through a breach made in the rampart the night before. It was 'a crouching, drooping, dispirited army' which Lawrence saw slowly picking its way through snow

[1] Lawrence.

a foot deep, even on the regular track. Next followed a train of doolies bearing the women and children, guarded by Lawrence and a few score horse and foot. Shelton led the main column, and Colonel Chambers brought up the rear. About 12,000 camp-followers stumbled along as they best could through the snow and slush. Long before the rear-guard started, a mob of Afghâns filled the intrenchment, destroying or burning whatever they could not carry away. Many of our people fell by the way, killed by cold and hunger, or pierced by bullets from the far-reaching jazails.

By nightfall the force had got no further than Baigrâm, only five miles off. A night of intense suffering for most was followed by a day of prolonged disaster. The troops and followers got mixed up together in ever worse confusion. Almost every step in the short march to Butkhâk was taken in blood. The sabre and the matchlock added their hundreds to the victims slain by the cruel frost. Guns were lost or abandoned, heaps of baggage disappeared, and half of our Sepoys threw away the arms which their numbed fingers could no longer grasp. That night the troops lay famished out on the snow which by next morning had become for many their bed of death. No tents remained, save for the women and children and a few of the commanders.

Thus far at least there had been a semblance of order. On the 8th, when the force entered the grim gorge of the Khurd Kâbul, under a rolling fire from

the Ghilzais lining the tall cliffs above, all traces of order were to be swept away in one wild helter-skelter of men, horses, guns, and baggage towards the plain beyond. The rear-guard and Eyre's gunners fought like heroes, but were carried off or slain in the general stampede. Akbar and his fellow-chiefs had lost all control over the fierce Ghilzais, who glutted themselves that day with blood and plunder. Next morning Shelton's whole force numbered only about 800 men of all arms. Thousands of camp-followers had fallen by the way, and nearly all the baggage had been plundered. Pottinger, Lawrence, Mackenzie swelled the list of Akbar's hostages; and during this day's halt all the women and children, the married men and the wounded officers were transferred into Akbar's keeping.

The march towards Tazín on the 10th, through the long pass of the Haft Kotal, repeated all the incidents of previous days; the grim courage of our European soldiers, the rush of camp-followers to the front, the despair of the Sepoys, the carnage, and the plunder. Only 250 white men reached Tazín. Not one Sepoy emerged that evening from the pass. Akbar now proposed that the remnant of our troops should lay down their arms, and allow him to escort them to Pesháwar. This offer Elphinstone declined on the plea that he could not with honour abandon his camp-followers to their fate. In view of all that had happened in the past two months, the reference to his honour sounds rather inopportune. A short rest at

Tazín was followed by a dreary night-march over the hills to Jagdalak. Darkness for a few hours favoured our men, but beyond Seh-Bába their merciless pursuers overtook them; and once more troops and followers became mingled in wild disorder. The blood of many brave men stained the snow before their comrades reached Jagdalak in the afternoon of the 11th. Shelton himself, with a handful of his troops, had held the post of danger in the rear, fighting all day against fearful odds.

Here, behind some ruined walls, the two hundred survivors of the Kábul force, worn out with hunger, thirst, and fatigue, sought rest and shelter from the bullets of their ruthless foes. A few hundred camp-followers crouched beside them. At a conference with the English leaders Akbar repeated his last proposal, which Elphinstone and Shelton again declined. They were now detained as hostages for the evacuation of Jalálábád. Next morning—the 12th—the conference was renewed in the presence of many Ghilzai chiefs, who had come to pay their homage to the Bárakzái Sirdár. His appeals to the compassion or the avarice of men who clamoured only for the blood of the hated infidels were so far successful, that they agreed for a handsome bribe to escort the English remnant unharmed to Jalálábád. But that door of escape was closed already to Anquetil and his dwindled band. Unaware of Akbar's purpose, and driven desperate by the galling matchlock-fire which their boldest sallies had failed to silence, they marched off in the night across the valley towards the Jagdalak Pass.

On reaching a long chasm between two walls of rock, they found the way blocked by a strong barricade of tree-trunks and branches of the prickly holly-oak.

In the midst of their efforts to break through this obstacle, a sudden shower of bullets rained down upon the struggling mass, while bodies of Afgháns rushed in with swords and knives to complete the work of carnage and rapine. A few score officers and men cut their way into the open country beyond. These struggled forward in detached parties to Gandamak, where three or four were taken prisoners, while nearly all their comrades died fighting to the last. Only six officers rode on to Fathábád. Two of these were cut down as they were eating some food which the villagers had brought them. Three more were overtaken and slain a few miles from Jalálábád. One only, Dr. Brydon, fainting from wounds, hunger, and exhaustion, was borne on by his jaded pony to the walls of Jalálábád; which Sale's officers, in calm defiance of Elphinstone's orders and Akbar's threats, were resolved at all costs to hold throughout the winter. Out of an army well-equipped and strong enough, as Durand maintained, 'in the hands of a Nott or a Napier, to have swept its discomfited foes in haughty triumph before the colours of England,' one man alone, after a week of intense suffering, lived to reach the goal of their common desire, and to tell his rescuers of the doom which had overtaken nearly all the rest[1].

[1] Kaye; Lawrence; Eyre.

Of the thousands that left Kábul on the 6th of January, a hundred and twenty men, women, and children survived as prisoners in the hands of Muhammad Akbar. Among these were Lady Macnaghten, Mrs. Trevor, and the stout-hearted Lady Sale, whose son-in-law Sturt had died earlier of his wounds. Very few of the camp-followers survived the horrors of that terrible retreat. Of the Sepoy regiments a few score frost-bitten wretches straggled presently into Peshāwar. The tidings of that great disaster, the heaviest and most shameful which had ever yet befallen our arms in Asia, sent a thrill of wrathful dismay through every English heart in India, and became the talk of every Indian bazaar. No outward movement, however, betrayed the drift of native feeling, nor did any of the native courts renew their old intrigues against our rule. They had learned perhaps from past experience the lessons which Hannibal, according to Horace, had learned from his long struggle with the might of old Rome. For our countrymen also there was comfort in reflecting that England's honour was still upheld by Nott and Rawlinson at Kandahár, by Sale and Broadfoot at Jalálábád, by Clerk, Mackeson, and Henry Lawrence in the Punjab.

It would be foolish to speak of such a catastrophe as the necessary outcome of the meddling policy which Lord Auckland had tried to carry out. The utter collapse of that policy, baleful, lawless, and blundering as it was, sprang mainly from the choice of agents ill fitted for their work. Macnaghten's cheery trust-

fulness, Elphinstone's bodily and mental decay, Shelton's stupid wilfulness, chronic dissensions between the civil and military powers, Sale's withholding of timely succour, all conspired, with Lord Auckland's half-measures and ill-timed economies, to work out the dramatic Nemesis of an enterprise begun in folly and wrong-doing. A Nott, or even a Keane, would have turned to worthier account the zeal of his officers and the disciplined courage of his troops. A better managed retreat would have saved our honour and many thousand lives. Viewed however in connexion with the events of the past three years, the annihilation of Elphinstone's force looked like our just reward for the wanton invasion of Afghánistán. It seemed as though a curse had brooded over our Afghán policy from the day when British troops escorted Sháh Shujá towards his former capital; a curse which blinded Macnaghten's eyes to the plainest facts; which led Burnes and Cotton to choose the worst possible site for cantonments; which placed a gentlemanly invalid in the chief command, and stultified the efforts of our ablest and smartest officers to atone for the shortcomings of their imbecile chiefs.

CHAPTER XI

CLOSE OF LORD AUCKLAND'S RULE

IT was a bitter moment for Lord Auckland when, in the last days of January, he learned that the Kábul Force had ceased to exist. There are some still living who remember the white face he wore on this occasion. Within a few weeks of his return homewards,—for a new Governor-General, appointed by a new Tory Ministry, was on his way to Calcutta—the whole fabric of his Afghán policy had been shattered by a blow which laid his own reputation in the dust. How such a thing could have happened to some 4,000 good British troops, assailed by only twice or thrice as many ill-armed Afgháns, was more, he wrote home, than he could understand [1]. Had not history taught him that such troops should be more than a match for ten times their number of Asiatic foemen? During the past year his eyes had been opened to the dangers of a policy which he had never pursued with a whole heart. Writing to the India House on the 22nd of December, when news from Kábul had reached him down to the middle of the previous

[1] *Greville Memoirs.*

month, he said that 'we have laid it down as a rule of our conduct that we would do all in our power to rescue our detachments wherever they may be encompassed by danger; but that, if the position of command and influence, which we have held in the capital of Afghánistán should once be absolutely and entirely lost, we would make no more sacrifices of the very serious and extensive nature which could alone be effectual, except under positive instructions from England, for the re-establishment of our supremacy throughout the country.' Even if worse things were to happen at Kábul, his present purpose of abandoning the country would remain unaltered. With this end in view he had instructed Nott and Rawlinson to prepare at their own time for leaving Kandahár; and had ordered a few regiments to march towards Pesháwar in support of Sale, and ultimately perhaps of Elphinstone[1].

At that time Lord Auckland's fears for the Kábul garrison were balanced by his trust in the power of 'bravery and discipline,' aided by decent generalship and the timely influences of frost and snow. When the sad reality burst upon him, he issued on the 31st of January, 1842, a General Order, which spoke of the great disaster as 'a partial reverse,' and 'a new occasion for displaying the stability and vigour of the British power, and the admirable spirit and valour of the British-Indian army.' He and his colleagues were resolved to act with prompt and steadfast vigour

[1] *Afghan Papers*, 1843.

for 'the maintenance of the honour and interests of the British Government.' Up to this time the display of vigour had been confined to the despatch of Wild's brigade across the Sutlej, the gathering of strong reinforcements about Karnál, and the final selection of Colonel George Pollock of the Bengal Artillery for the command which Elphinstone was deemed unfit to retain [1].

But this spurt of energy soon died off. There was much indeed to disquiet and perplex the Governor-General. There was war with China, in which troops from India, including three of his English regiments, had to bear a part. There was no certainty of maintaining peace with his neighbours in Nepál. The cost of his spirited foreign policy was saddling India with a heavy debt and reducing her garrisons below their proper strength. That policy was disliked by most of Peel's colleagues, and condemned by the bulk of Peel's followers. The Commander-in-Chief, Sir Jasper Nicolls, was strongly set against any attempt to reconquer any part of Afghánistán, even for the purpose of chastising an insolent enemy. And the Governor-General himself was loth in those last days of his rule to enter on new enterprises which might seem to tie his successor's hands. If Pollock's troops were to march through the Kháibar, they should do nothing more than help Sale to withdraw his garrison from Jalálábád. Any question of 'ulterior operations' for the punishment of our enemies, the recovery of our lost

[1] *Afghan Papers*, 1843.

honour, and the safeguarding of our Eastern Empire, must be considered by-and-by.

Such was the tenour of Lord Auckland's letters to Sir Jasper Nicolls, then marching towards the Sutlej, and to Mr. George Clerk, his political agent for the Punjab. The latter gentleman, whose name stands high on the roll of Anglo-Indian statesmen, had been stoutly seconded by Mr. Robertson, the Lieutenant-Governor of Agra, in his efforts to hasten the advance of Wild's force from Firozpur. Could he have had his own way, Sale's garrison might have been relieved before winter had fairly set in. But Nicolls was slow and wary; and Wild's brigade, starting late in November, took more than a month to traverse the three hundred miles between the Sutlej and Peshāwar. The artillerymen who went with him had no guns. On the 3rd of January four rickety field-pieces were made over to our gunners by Avitabile's indignant Sikhs. But fresh delays damped the ardour of Wild's young Sepoys. At last, on the night of the 15th, two of Wild's regiments entered the Khāibar and made their way unharmed to the fort of Alí Masjid; but by some strange oversight they left behind them three-fourths of their food-supplies. A few days later Wild himself moved forward with the remainder of his brigade. But the Sikh troops that were to have acted with him had gone off in open mutiny to Peshāwar, the borrowed guns broke down at the first discharge; and the Sepoys, losing heart and order as the Afrídí bullets pattered among them, fell back in

unseemly haste to Jamrúd. The Brigadier himself, as brave an officer as ever lived, was disabled by a severe wound, and all thought of trying to help Sale in his apparent need had for the time to be given up [1].

Five days later, on the 24th, Alí Masjid was abandoned, and the garrison under Colonel Moseley fought their way betimes out of the Kháibar with some inevitable loss, but not without honour. Want of food alone had compelled the retreat.

Early in February General Pollock reached Peshávar three days ahead of the second brigade, which Clerk's energy had been hurrying forward from Firozpur. By that time Wild's regiments were in no mood or condition for new enterprises. Half of the Sepoys were in hospital, and the rest were deeply tainted with the rebellious spirit of those Sikh allies whom even Avitabile could not always manage. They had no heart for another march into the dreaded Kháibar, and some even of their English officers shared the same feeling. Of all the Sikh leaders Sher Singh, who had just succeeded Karak as ruler of the Punjab, stood nearly alone in the display of friendship for the friends of Ranjít Singh; and he had little power to enforce compliance with Clerk's demands for the promised succours and supplies. Deaf to all Mackeson's offers and promises, the Afrídí clans of the Kháibar prepared to defend their passes with all their armed strength. In answer to Sale's and Macgregor's prayers

[1] *Afghan Papers*; Sir H. Edwardes's *Life of Sir Henry Lawrence*.

for help Pollock could only assure them of his firm intention to advance at the earliest possible moment for their relief.

Meanwhile, ever since the 12th of November, 1841, Sale's brigade had been doing soldierly service inside Jalálábád. The defences of that place, which lies midway between Peshâwar and Kábul, were found to be in utter disrepair; and close around them were garden-houses, enclosed fields, mosques, and ruined forts. Broadfoot and his sappers were soon at work repairing and improving the defences with the tools which his foresight had brought away from Kábul. Supplies were got in from across the Kábul river, and a well-timed sally drove the Afghâns to a respectful distance. A second sortie, led by Dennie on the 1st of December, freed the garrison for many weeks from further molestation. The troops were in good heart, and, thanks to Broadfoot's energy, the long line of ramparts and bastions was made strong enough to defy all attacks from an enemy who had few if any guns [1].

On the 8th of January Sale received Elphinstone's orders to evacuate Jalálábád, orders which he and Macgregor at once declined to obey. But towards the end of January, when the Kábul disasters had been followed by Wild's reverses in the Kháibar, the spirits of many in Sale's garrison began to droop. On the 27th Sale held a council of war—a jackdaw

[1] *Afghan Papers*; Broadfoot's *Career of Major George Broadfoot*; Marshman's *Havelock*, &c.

parliament, as Havelock called it—to consider the terms on which he proposed, in reply to an inquiring letter from Sháh Shujá, to treat for the surrender of his post and the safe-conduct of its garrison to Peshâwar. Macgregor acted as Sale's spokesman, and the picture he drew was dark enough to win for his main proposals the votes of brave men like Dennie, Monteath, Backhouse, and Abbott. One member only —for Havelock, though present, was not of the council—had the courage to stand forth as the champion of his country's honour, and to fight tooth and nail against a project at once so needless, unwise, and disgraceful. In language hardly too strong for the occasion, George Broadfoot refuted every point in Macgregor's statement, and contested every clause of the draft letter addressed to Akbar through the Sháh. We had no right, he pleaded, to take any orders save from our own Government. Elphinstone's capitulation could bind no other garrison than his own. Instead of making terms with a faithless enemy, it was our paramount duty to hold out to the last, or else to cut our way at all hazards to Peshâwar. The Government would not abandon us, although Wild had been repulsed. The lives of the garrison were of less importance than the welfare of the State. 'What would you do if attacked?' he asked Sale. 'Fight,' was Sale's reply. 'Why then invite all Afghánistán round you before fighting?'

At the close of a hot discussion which lasted two days Broadfoot found himself in a minority of one.

The letter, as amended in one or two details, was signed by Macgregor and sent on to Kábul. The Sháh's answer, 'If you are sincere in your offers, let all the chief gentlemen put their seals,' opened a back-door of escape from a transaction of which most of the consenting parties had meanwhile grown ashamed. Broadfoot's demand that the whole question should be reconsidered led to another warm debate, in which Sale and Macgregor stood their ground until it became clear that they stood alone. Sale accepted the ruling of the majority in favour of Broadfoot's manlier and wiser views. Next day those views were further justified by the receipt of cheering messages from Peshâwar. By that time the ditch round the walls—the work of Broadfoot's sappers—was nearly completed, and the garrison, no longer doubtful of their officers' designs, were in higher health and spirits than ever before [1].

The great earthquake of the 19th of February wrought fearful havoc with the defences of Jalálábád. The shocks did much damage at Peshâwar also, where a falling beam crushed the table round which Pollock and some of his officers had been sitting a moment before [2]. Sale himself, with his secretary Havelock, had a narrow escape. But Broadfoot's sappers, aided by relays from all the other troops, worked with such a will that before night much of the damage was substantially repaired; and before three weeks the works

[1] Broadfoot; Marshman; Durand; Kaye.

[2] Low's *Life of Pollock.*

were stronger than ever. Akbar had lost his opportunity. Foraging parties from the garrison still went out daily, to return with full loads. In the successful sally, made by Dennie's column on the 10th of March, Broadfoot's sappers, always ready for any kind of service, led the attack and covered the retreat in a style which won for them Sale's ungrudging, if tardily rendered, praise[1].

All through that winter General Nott, ably seconded by Major Rawlinson, held strong possession of Kandahár. The news of the Kábul outbreak in November and Elphinstone's request for help had reached him just in time for countermanding the homeward march of one of his two brigades. Maclaren's return in December from his unsuccessful attempt to reach Kábul gave Nott all the strength he needed for the maintenance of his own position against a country in arms. Whatever dangers menaced, he was ready to meet them with the firm courage of a commander justly confident in his officers, his men, and above all in himself. Aktar Khán was again in the field, and round him rallied most of the neighbouring Kháns in concert with the rebellious prince Safdar Jang. On the 12th of January Nott himself marched out against a strong force of insurgents encamped on the Arghandáb, five miles westward of Kandahár. After half an hour's fighting the enemy were scattered in wild flight. Surrounded by cunning foes, and watched by secret plotters within the city, he busied himself

[1] Broadfoot.

in strengthening his defences, laying in abundant supplies, and enforcing the utmost vigilance throughout his garrison. 'Whenever the Afghán tribes gathered to attack him'—says Sir Herbert Edwardes—'he marched promptly out, thrashed them, and marched back again.' His troops were in excellent health and spirits, ready to do and dare anything under a general who knew how to command, and when to sound a halt. 'Be bold, be bold, but be not overbold,' was his rule of conduct. Many good officers he had around him; but the best among them was Nott himself.

When the Afghán chiefs, in February, summoned Nott to evacuate Kandahár, in compliance with orders signed by Elphinstone and Pottinger, the stern old warrior scornfully refused to obey any commands save those which came from his own Government. On this point, at any rate, he and Lord Auckland were of one mind. In the first days of March a thousand Afghán families were turned by Rawlinson out of the city. A few days later Kandahár was for some hours in no small peril of capture by surprise. On the 7th Nott had led out the greater part of his troops against large bodies of Afgháns who were driven before him for three days running. On the morning of the 10th there was no enemy in his front. Many of the insurgents had doubled back in the night towards Kandahár. That same evening a sudden attack was made on three of the city gates; one of which soon took fire from the burning brushwood piled up against it. Swarms of yelling Gházís, many of them drunk with

bhang, surged up against the blazing timbers and beneath the city walls. But the disciplined courage of the small garrison backed by the resourceful skill of their leader, Major Lane, completely frustrated each fresh attempt to clamber over the grain-bags hurriedly heaped up behind the gate. After four hours of fierce struggle the baffled Afgháns disappeared, leaving behind them many of their dead. Later in the month Nott and Wymer sallied out again to teach the enemy another lesson of respect for British prowess against heavy odds[1].

Less fortunate was the lot of Colonel Palmer's garrison at Ghazní. Forced by treachery to abandon the town in December and to shut themselves up in the citadel, Palmer's Sepoys suffered terribly from the bitter cold, intensified by the want of fuel and by short rations of unwholesome food. The enemy summoned them to surrender in accordance with the agreement signed at Kábul. Palmer put them off for a time with specious excuses; but at last it seemed to him that nothing but capitulation could save his troops. On the 6th of March the wasted garrison marched out of the citadel under promise of safe-conduct to Pesháwar. But a crowd of Gházís made a fierce attack on the houses in which the garrison had been allowed to take shelter. For the next fortnight they underwent the horrors of a second and far more fatal siege. At last, when nearly all the Sepoys had stolen off in hopes of making their way to Pesháwar, the officers

[1] Stocqueler; *Afghan Papers*.

agreed to lay down their arms and go as prisoners to Kábul.

Among the prisoners was young John Nicholson, who in September, 1857, received his death-wound as he led his storming-column along the ramparts of captured Delhi. The angry tears he shed on giving up his sword expressed a feeling presently shared by every officer in Kandahár; a feeling which, early in April, led the new Governor-General to order the holding of a court-martial on Colonel Palmer as well as General Elphinstone. Palmer's subsequent acquittal was confirmed by Sir J. Nicolls, who held that the circumstances under which he had surrendered his post 'were such as he could neither control, alter, nor alleviate[1].'

A stronger man made a better fight against untoward circumstances at a post which lay between Ghazní and Kandahár. It was fortunate for Captain Halkett Craigie that the garrison of Khelát-i-Ghilzai had been stiffened by forty English gunners, a few sappers, and later still by three companies of Maclaren's Sepoys. But Craigie himself was a commander after Nott's own heart. During the winter no outward enemy, except the icy north wind, assailed his lonely garrison; but the first days of spring brought the Afgháns around him in ever-increasing numbers, that crept up by means of trenches closer and closer to their intended prey. At last, on the 21st of May, 4,000 Ghilzais, hearing of Wymer's approach from Kandahár,

[1] Kaye; *Afghan Papers.*

tried their hardest to carry Craigie's stronghold by escalade. Again and again they swarmed up to the parapets, only to be swept down by grapeshot and bullets, or to be thrust back by unerring bayonets; until at last they withdrew despairing from a struggle which had cost them several hundred lives. Not one of Craigie's men had been killed.

While Pollock was waiting near Jamrúd for his English dragoons and horse artillery, and Clerk at Lahore was urging the Sikh Government to heartier efforts in aid of their allies, Major Outram, as our agent with the Sind Amírs, was active in furnishing Brigadier England with all needful means for the march of a strong brigade to Quetta, in charge of ample treasure and supplies for the Kandahár garrison. By the end of February England was encamped at Dádar ready for a forward move. On the 28th of the same month the new Governor-General landed at Calcutta and took the oaths of office in Government House. A fortnight later Lord Auckland began his homeward voyage, broken in health and spirits by the disastrous issues of his Afghán policy, but cheered by many parting demonstrations of sympathy and goodwill for a ruler who left behind him no personal enemies and numerous friends.

An exhausted treasury and an increasing debt were his chief legacies to the country he had gone out to govern with very different prospects six years before. The engrossing pursuit of a foreign policy, in which he had never heartily concurred, left him little leisure

for the more congenial work of internal reform. Lord Auckland's statesmanship must be judged mainly by the fruits of a policy hurtful alike to his own reputation, his country's honour, and the well-being of our Indian Empire. The first year of his rule had opened with a surplus revenue of a million and a half. He left behind him a deficit of two millions, and an addition of twelve millions to the public debt. Some millions more had to be expended by his successor before the disgraceful retreat from Kábul and the crowning catastrophe in the Afghán snows could be partially requited by the victories of Nott and Pollock.

It is worth noting by the way that the first accession of territory during the present reign took place, with Lord Auckland's sanction, in January 1839, when a small force of Europeans and Sepoys from Bombay, aided by a squadron of Queen's and Company's warships, captured the peninsula and town of Aden at the mouth of the Red Sea, after a spirited fight of some hours. The Arab Governor had promised a year before to cede the place to us in requital for outrages on our shipwrecked people. But his followers would not let him keep his word, and possession had to be won by force. In 1841 several steamers of the Indian Navy played a prominent part in the capture of Chinese forts, especially in Sir Hugh Gough's expedition against Canton [1].

[1] Low's *History of the Indian Navy.*

CHAPTER XII

Retiring by way of Kábul

The new Governor-General, Lord Ellenborough, had already given promise of great achievements in the public service. The clever and accomplished son of an eminent Chief Justice, he had gained some useful experience of Indian affairs at the Board of Control in 1828–30. For some years past he had spoken with force and knowledge on Indian topics in the House of Lords. When Peel returned to power in the autumn of 1841, Lord Ellenborough resumed his seat at the Board of Control. In common with his colleagues he had no love for Auckland's foreign policy; and he went out to India full of those praiseworthy purposes which had been declared by each new Governor-General in turn at the farewell dinner given him by the Court of Directors. His reputation for energy and firmness had gone out before him, and his arrival in Calcutta was hailed by our countrymen as the dawning of a brighter day for all India.

From the 3rd to the 12th of March Lord Auckland and his sisters remained as guests of Auckland's successor in Government House. The retiring Governor,

who during that period conversed a good deal with his host, seems to have found him a wild and boastful talker, puffed up with vanity and pride. The new Governor-General spoke as if he were the Great Mogul of modern times. He was determined 'to come Aurangzeb over them.' He talked regretfully of the good things he would have done for India had he gone out thither twenty years before. As for the old King of Delhi, he intended to turn him and his family out of the royal Palace, and convert it into a residence for himself[1].

On the 15th of March, three days after Lord Auckland's departure, Lord Ellenborough laid by letter before Sir J. Nicolls a careful statement of the policy he meant to pursue. Setting wholly aside, as a source of weakness, the policy which had ended by provoking a religious as well as a national war, he held it his first duty to ensure the safety of our Afghán garrisons and other troops in the field, and then to re-establish our military reputation among Eastern peoples by inflicting upon the Afgháns 'some signal and decisive blow.' That done, we might withdraw with honour from Afghánistán, 'satisfied that the king we have set up has not the support of the nation over which he has been placed.' If the release of the prisoners taken at Kábul, an object 'deeply interesting in point of feeling and of honour,' could not be effected by other means, it might become a question whether Pollock's and Sale's forces should return to the country below

[1] *Greville Memoirs.*

the Kháibar, or 'take a forward position near Jalálábád, or even advance to Kábul.' Lord Ellenborough further desired that a large force under Sir J. Nicolls should be massed upon the Sutlej, in order to influence the Sikhs and the Indian States by an attitude of imposing strength, and to give confidence to our own soldiers and subjects.

In the same letter the Governor-General showed himself fully alive to the advantage of re-occupying Kábul 'even for a week,' with a view to recovering the prisoners, gratifying the army, and overawing all our enemies. But no such movement was to be attempted, unless Major-General Pollock could feel sure of his power to conquer all resistance with his own troops alone, and to keep up his communications with Peshâwar. And he expressed a fear that the want of cavalry and beasts of draught and burden would disable Nott from achieving anything except the relief of Khelát-i-Ghilzai and the safe withdrawal of his troops 'at the proper season' from Afghánistán[1].

The letter did not err on the side of rashness: it might have been dictated by Nicolls himself, or by Lord Ellenborough's second-in-council, Mr. Wilberforce Bird. For the vindication of our honour and the punishment of 'an atrocious enemy,' some risk might have to be incurred. But our generals were exhorted to minimize those risks by every possible precaution. They were not to depend upon the good faith of our

[1] *Afghan Papers.*

Sikh allies, nor to give much heed to the interested counsels of Afghán refugees. They were also warned with anxious emphasis against the danger of 'disseminating' their troops in a hostile country 'having difficult communication,' and against the further danger of leaving any reserves so weakly composed and so poorly equipped, as to be unable to move promptly and safely forward, whenever required. In the same cautious spirit Lord Ellenborough rejected, as inconsistent with his Afghán policy, Major Rawlinson's 'speculative' scheme for annexing Kandahár to the dominions of Sháh Kámrán, 'that nominal ruler of Herát.'

A copy of this despatch was forwarded to Pollock, who was still waiting for the cavalry and guns of his third brigade; still hoping with Mackeson's aid to win for his troops a quiet passage through the Khái-bar; still uncertain how far he could trust the bulk of his Sepoys, or count upon the co-operation of his Sikh allies. There was much indeed to worry and perplex the quiet cool-headed officer of artillery who, in the words of Sir Herbert Edwardes, 'had fought his guns in two sieges and three great wars, had attracted the notice of a certain Lord Lake, supposed to know something of soldiering, and obtained the then rare distinction in the Company's service of a Companionship of the Bath.' To create a soldierlike force out of spoiled materials, to raise the spirits and win the confidence of soldiers cowed by defeat and ripe for mutiny, to secure the due co-operation of

allies who loved us little better than they loved the Afgháns, was the task which Pollock strove to accomplish during the two months of his halt at Peshávar. In spite of pressing appeals from Jalálábád, he knew himself powerless to move forward with untrustworthy troops. 'God knows'—he wrote to Macgregor on the 12th of March—'it has been my anxious wish to do so, but I have been helpless. I came on ahead to Peshávar to arrange for an advance, but was saluted with a report of 1,900 sick, and a bad feeling among the Sepoys. I visited the hospitals and endeavoured to encourage by talking to them; but they had *no heart*.'

On the 1st of March a fresh panic had broken out among the Sepoys, and the Hindus in four out of five regiments were openly declaring against a forward move. Desertions happened almost daily. Coercion at such a time was out of the question; but Pollock and his officers did what they could to allay the ferment, and after some days a reaction set in. So thoroughly, however, did Pollock mistrust his Sepoys, that he wrote to Sale on the 27th—'Without more white faces I question even now if they would go [1].'

Two days later White's brigade of cavalry and horse artillery arrived at Peshávar. Another regiment of white faces—the 31st Foot—was still so far behind, that Pollock decided to go on without them as soon as all his arrangements were complete. Sale's Europeans were now living on salt meat, while his

[1] *Afghan Papers*; Low's *Life of Sir G. Pollock*.

Sepoys had only half-rations of *áta*, or wheaten meal. Pollock's heart yearned to hasten to the rescue of his beleaguered comrades, who, if Sale had so willed it, might long since have rescued themselves. A timely capture of 500 sheep on the 1st of April relieved Sale's garrison from present anxieties on the score of food. About the same date Pollock knew that he would have to force his way through the Kháibar Pass, for Mackeson's negotiations with the Afrídí chiefs had been cut short by the sudden march of a body of Akbar's soldiery to Alí Masjid[1].

By that time also the long uncertainty as to the part which our Sikh allies might bear in the impending movement had come to an auspicious end. For weeks past George Clerk and his active lieutenant, Captain Henry Lawrence, the future ruler of the Punjab, had spared no conceivable effort to secure for Pollock's enterprise a strong and seasonable backing of Sikh troops. While Clerk's diplomacy at Lahore emboldened Sher Singh to order the assemblage of a powerful force at Pesháwar, under Guláb Singh, the wily Rájá of Jammú, Lawrence's bold counsels and ubiquitous energy made themselves felt in numberless details of military and civil business, and hurried on the march of laggard Sikh commanders towards the front. Nothing in fact seemed to tire him, and no sort of work came amiss to his hands. Pollock very soon discovered the worth of the young political, to whose unwearied zeal and ready forethought he was

[1] Marshman; Broadfoot.

largely indebted for the means of marching forward at the appointed time [1].

At last the needful preparations were completed. Thanks to Lawrence, a powerful Sikh force undertook to enter one mouth of the Kháibar, while Pollock's army held its way through the other, both roads leading to Alí Masjid. Every detail of the movement had been carefully explained by Pollock himself to each of his commanders. The Sepoys were reported to be in good heart. The officers, emulous of their leader's example, had reduced their baggage to the smallest possible compass. Lawrence had taken care that the troops should not suffer needlessly from want of water. At 3.30 a.m. on the 5th of April, without beat of drum or blast of bugle, the force assembled at Jamrúd moved slowly forward over the rough ground towards the Shádí Bhágiári entrance of the Pass, while ten Sikh regiments under Avitabile took their way an hour later towards the Jabáki mouth. In due time the flanking columns of Pollock's force clambered up the steep crags on either side of the opening, driving the enemy from one post of vantage after another, and clearing a way with the help of our guns for the advance of the centre column with its long train of stores and baggage into the Pass. In this brilliant crowning of the heights in the face of thousands of resolute Afrídís the lusty soldiers of the 9th Foot were stoutly seconded by their swarthy comrades. 'Nothing'—wrote Pollock—'could resist the

[1] Low's *Life of Sir G. Pollock.*

The officers for their part would take no denial. Abbott had got his guns ready for action without orders. After a long and stormy discussion the General, who wanted moral rather than physical courage, gave way; and by daylight of the 7th of April Sale himself led 1,800 of his troops to the attack, in three columns, commanded respectively by Dennie, Monteath, and Havelock. The enemy numbered about 6,000. Within two hours the fight was over: Akbar's troops were in full retreat to Laghmán; his four guns, the trophies of our shame at Kábul, were in our hands, together with three standards, all the camp-furniture, ordnance-stores, and much grain. The completeness of a victory which might have been won as easily some weeks before was marred only by the death of Colonel Dennie, who fell in a needless attack upon a small fort that might safely have been let alone. With a loss of eleven slain and seventy-one wounded, Sale's brigade had forestalled one object of Pollock's advance [1].

On the 16th of April Pollock's division encamped outside the stronghold whose brave defenders were officially hailed by Lord Ellenborough with the sounding title of 'The Illustrious Garrison.' One incident of the siege is worth recording by the way. Out of the 500 sheep captured on the 1st of April, 40 were assigned to the 35th Sepoys, who made them over at once to their white comrades of the 13th Foot, declaring that the Europeans were in more need of animal food than themselves.

[1] *Afghan Papers*; Marshman; Broadfoot; Kaye.

Sale's soldiers now fell into their places under Pollock's supreme command. By that time also the political functions hitherto discharged by Rawlinson and Macgregor had been transferred to the chief military commanders, Pollock and Nott. It was felt by Lord Ellenborough, even more strongly than of late by Lord Auckland, that the divided authority which had wrought so much harm in the past could no longer be endured when commanders of the calibre of Nott and Pollock were in the field. The Governor-General, who plumed himself on his soldierlike sympathies, hated politicals as cordially as Nott or Nicolls, and had no eyes whatever for the merits which Pollock brought to his notice in such officers as Mackeson and Henry Lawrence. He looked upon Clerk and Outram as meddlesome amateurs, whose advice on military matters should be severely repelled. In the present case, however, his action had merely followed the line taken by Lord Auckland in his Resolution of the 6th of January.

Far more open to question was his apparent change of purpose, after he had heard of the fall of Ghazní and the repulse at Haikalzai of the small force which England had led out from Quetta, in charge of treasure, medicines, and ammunition for the garrison of Kandahár. The letters he despatched in April and May from Benares and Allahábád all pointed to an early removal of every British soldier from Afghánistán. Nott was directed to retire towards Sakhar, as soon as he had brought off the garrison of

Khelát-i-Ghilzai. Pollock was bidden to retire below the Kháibar as soon as possible, unless he had already begun his march on Kábul, or unless the issue of his negotiations for the release of Akbar's prisoners might be endangered by too hasty a retreat. Whatever Pollock had done or might do, it was still the Governor-General's opinion—wrote Mr. Secretary Maddock—'that the only safe course is that of withdrawing the army under your command, at the earliest practicable period, into positions within the Kháibar Pass, where it may possess easy and certain communications with India.' The brave words uttered on the 15th of March were already forgotten. For many weeks it seemed as if neither the honour of our arms nor the rescue of English captives were worth the risk and trouble of one more campaign[1].

Happily for both these objects Pollock was in no hurry to act upon instructions which he would fain have kept secret alike from friends and foes. Making the most of such discretionary powers as he chose to read into those instructions, he pleaded want of carriage, the claims of the prisoners, the dangers of a hasty retreat, and a due regard for the national honour, as cogent reasons for standing fast, or even for advancing a few marches beyond Jalálábád. For an advance to Kábul Nott's co-operation would be required; and without some further demonstration of our power that officer would not find it easy to retire from Kandahár. In his letters to Henry Lawrence he regarded an

[1] *Afghan Papers.*

advance to vindicate our honour as far less perilous than a retreat without the prisoners, whom his conscience forbade him to leave behind. 'God grant it may not be a disastrous affair!'—was Lawrence's comment, in a letter to Clerk, on a piece of news which Clerk himself shrank from telling in plain words to Sher Singh's foreign minister at Lahore. His tongue, he wrote, 'had been tied by shame,' and he 'thanked God that the candles burnt very dim,' while he was letting the Sikh minister 'discover the truth[1].'

At Kandahár the order to retreat came, said Rawlinson, like a thunderbolt on himself and his noble chief. Wymer's splendid brigade of Sepoys had just been clearing the way across the Khojak for England's advance, at Nott's orders, from Quetta to Kandahár. On the 19th of May Wymer started again at the head of a strong column to bring off Craigie's garrison and destroy the works of Khelát-i-Ghilzai. Meanwhile Nott himself prepared, like a good soldier, to obey orders which seemed to leave him no discretion. He was still waiting for further supplies of carriage from below, when a letter of June 1 from Allahábád left him free to remain a few months longer at Kandahár. Another letter of the same date assumed that Pollock would be compelled by want of carriage and other causes to postpone his retreat until October. It was further suggested that Pollock might employ the interval in making 'sallies' upon the enemy around Jalálábád, so as to 'create a strong desire' on their

[1] *Afghan Papers*; Edwardes; Kaye.

part 'to induce you to leave the country.' Grandmotherly advice of this sort, flavoured by covert sneers, was all that Lord Ellenborough could offer to the man who wanted only permission to march straight upon Kábul.

Meanwhile Pollock had been trying to obtain from Muhammad Akbar the peaceful surrender of his captives on terms befitting the national honour. But the negotiations fell through in May. By that time the prisoners, who were not unkindly treated, had been removed from Badiábád in the Laghmán district to Kábul, where Sháh Shujá had been treacherously murdered on the 5th of April by the son of the Bárakzái Nawáb, Zamán Khán. On the 24th Elphinstone died at Tazín, worn out with prolonged suffering of mind and body. By Akbar's orders his body was conveyed for burial in charge of his English man-servant to Jalálábád. The death of our Saduzai puppet, who had long since lost the goodwill of his late allies, became the signal for fresh intrigues and fighting among rival chiefs in Kábul, which issued, two months later, in the enthronement of the Saduzai prince, Fathi Jang, with Muhammad Akbar for his self-appointed Wazír.

From April to the middle of June Henry Lawrence at Peshâwar, zealously aided by Mr. Robertson at Agra, was engaged in collecting baggage-animals for Pollock's use, and in forwarding convoys of supplies, treasure, and ordnance-stores through the Kháibar, for the free use of which we had to depend on subsi-

dized Afrídís and turbulent Sikh allies. 'What between Sikhs, Afrídís, and grain-bags,' said Lawrence, 'I never was so bothered.' At last, in the first week of June, he induced a strong Sikh contingent to march with Pollock's sanction to Jalálábád[1].

For some weeks past the secret orders which Pollock would fain have concealed from his own officers, which tied Clerk's tongue at his interview with the Sikh Minister, had become the talk of every station, if not every bazaar, in India. An indiscreet officer on Nicolls's staff had blurted out the truth by letter to a friend in Pollock's camp, and very soon from all parts of India arose a bitter outcry against the 'cowardly counsels' to which Lord Ellenborough had given so ready an ear. Meanwhile both from Downing Street and the India House came strong injunctions to vindicate the national honour and to rescue every prisoner from Afghán hands. Thus urged and goaded from every quarter, the Governor-General at last made up his wavering mind to the safe but selfish policy of letting Nott and Pollock take their own way forward at their own virtual risk. His letters of the 4th of July to the two commanders betrayed the skill of a master in the art of verbal self-defence. His own opinions, he declared, had undergone no change. The order for withdrawal still held good; but Nott was allowed to choose between retiring into Sind by way of Quetta, and retiring to Pesháwar by way of Ghazní and Kábul. Pollock for his part was empowered to advance in

[1] Edwardes.

concert with Nott, should that officer 'decide upon adopting the line of retirement by Ghazní and Kábul[1].'

Even then Lord Ellenborough did not seem to reckon upon a joint advance from both sides to a common goal, for he tells Nott that General Pollock 'will probably not deem it necessary to move any troops actually to Kábul,' where Nott's force would be 'amply sufficient to beat anything the Afghâns can oppose to it.' His letters to Pollock and to the Secret Committee imply that Pollock was to support his brother-general by moving some of his troops towards 'the upper end of the Jalálábád valley.'

Neither General, however, shrank from acting upon instructions so worded as to give them a free hand for the movement on which their hearts had long been set. After the rout of Aktar Khán's 10,000 Gházís on the 29th of May by Nott himself at the head of about 1,600 men, no armed enemy dared to show himself near Kandahár. On Wymer's return from Khelát-i-Ghilzai, Nott felt himself more than strong enough to march anywhere, if only he could muster the needful carriage and supplies. His 'beautiful regiments' were in high health and spirits; and he held 1,000 of his Sepoys to be more than a match for 5,000 Afghâns. Despatching a strong brigade under England to Quetta with all his spare guns, he himself on the 7th of August marched out of Kandahár at the head of 8,000 choice

[1] *Afghan Papers*; Kaye; Lord Colchester's *Indian Administration of Lord Ellenborough.*

troops of all arms, confident alike in their leader and in themselves [1].

Pollock meanwhile had found work for some of his troops in the neighbourhood of Jalálábád. For several weeks of June and July a strong column under Monteath was out in the Shinwári valley, chastising the tribes which had shared in the plunder of Elphinstone's force and were known to hold one of the captured guns. Not only were their fortlets and houses utterly destroyed, but their grain-stores were sacked or fired, and the trees which gave them shade were hacked about and left to perish. A good many Afgháns were shot down as they fled, or slaughtered, if they made a stand, by Abbott's shells. It was the only way, according to Macgregor, of inflicting upon such people the punishment they deserved. But the gun was recovered, with much of the stolen treasure, and 'both men and cattle had entirely subsisted on the resources of the country [2].'

The negotiations with Akbar had also been renewed in July, when Captain Troup brought fresh proposals into Pollock's camp. He went back to Kábul with a verbal message from Pollock demanding the surrender of all the guns and trophies that had fallen into Afghán hands. Akbar would surrender nothing without a written promise that our troops would leave his country forthwith. Early in August Troup reappeared at Jalálábád in company with George Lawrence, whose brother Henry had lately come up to take charge

[1] *Afghan Papers*; Kaye. [2] Kaye.

of the Sikh contingent. Akbar's threat to carry his captives off to Bámián failed to modify the demands of the British General, who was only waiting for a word from Nott to fix the right moment for his own advance.

By the middle of August he knew of Nott's intention to 'retire to India *viâ* Kábul and Jalálábád.' On the 20th Pollock marched forward at the head of some 8,000 of his best troops, all burning to avenge the disasters of the previous winter. Halting on the 23rd at Gandamak for further news from Nott, he drove the enemy from the neighbouring fort and village of Mámu Khel, by a movement in which Broadfoot's Sappers surpassed themselves. On the 7th of September Pollock resumed his march. Next day Sale's division cleared the Ghilzai masses in brilliant style from the hills on either side of the Jagdalak Pass. The dried and shrivelled corpses of those who had perished in the snows of January lay heaped or scattered along the road; some of them still recognizable by former comrades. Those ghastly relics of an ignoble slaughter stirred our men to a pitch of fury which boded ill for the foe in any future encounter.

On the 12th Pollock halted in the Tazín valley. Meanwhile Akbar had sent the most of his prisoners off to the Hindu Kush; and, speaking for his fellow-chiefs, had begged Troup to return once more with fresh overtures to the British camp. When Troup assured him that the time for treating had gone by, he resolved to stake everything on the issue of one

last appeal to arms. Akbar had intended to bar the passage of the Khurd Kábul; but Pollock's halt at Tazín lured him on to meet his fate on ground less formidable to resolute troops. On the 13th the two armies clashed together near the mouth of the Tazín Pass. Many thousands of Akbar's best marksmen held the lofty hills which surrounded the valley, while large bodies of Afghán horse swept down towards Pollock's rear. Contrary to their wont, the Afgháns on the heights advanced to meet their assailants. Our muskets were, as usual, no match for the Afghán jazail. But nothing could long withstand the determined rush of our soldiers, who scaled the heights like born mountaineers, and charged the enemy with fixed bayonets and loud hurrahs. Englishmen and Sepoys, horse, foot, and gunners, all fought their best that day. Unett's dragoons, backed up by the Native cavalry, charged with murderous effect into the masses of Afghán horse. The enemy held out bravely with unwonted stubbornness, retiring sullenly from crag to crag, and losing heavily before they broke and fled. They made their last stand upon the highest peak of the Haft Kotal, whence they were finally driven in swift rout by the sturdy little Gúrkhas of Broadfoot's corps [1].

That evening Muhammad Akbar was far on his way towards the Hindu Kush, while the victors had marched on to Khurd Kábul. Two guns and three standards were the main trophies of an achievement

[1] *Afghan Papers*; Kaye; Marshman; Broadfoot.

which had cost them only 32 killed and 130 wounded. On the 15th of September Pollock's army was encamped on the old racecourse east of Kábul, and next day the British colours once more floated from the top of the Bálá Hissár. Two ladies with children and a few male prisoners who had been left at Kábul under the care of Dr. Campbell were brought into camp by Colin Troup. Pollock had already despatched his military secretary, Sir Richmond Shakespear, with 600 Kazilbásh horse, in quest of the larger band of captives, whose fate hung upon the seeming readiness of Akbar's deputy to betray his trust.

On the 17th Nott himself exchanged greetings with Pollock from his camp on the western side of Kábul. His long march from Kandahár had been accomplished quite as successfully as the much shorter march from Jalálábád. On the road to Ghazní he had encountered no serious resistance save at Ghoain, where, on the 30th of August, 10,000 Afghâns sought to bar his advance. One charge of his fine infantry sent them flying, and much booty fell into the victors' hands. On the 5th of September Nott encamped before Ghazní; but the fear of his name had fallen upon the garrison, who abandoned that stronghold during the night. Next day Nott's engineers burst every gun on the walls, blew up all the bastions, burned the gateways and the roofs of the principal buildings, and converted both town and citadel into heaps of ruins, in requital of the wrongs inflicted on Palmer's garrison. More than 300 of Palmer's Sepoys were

rescued from the slavery into which they had been sold. From the tomb of the terrible Sultán Mahmúd, outside the city, Nott carried off the gates which Mahmúd was said to have borne away eight centuries before from the Hindu temple of Somnáth in Gujarát. This strange duty had been laid upon him by Lord Ellenborough, whose theatrical fancy revelled in the prospect of 'avenging Somnáth' by the plunder of an old Muhammadan shrine. The great Sultán's club and shield, which Nott was also to bring away with him, could not be found. It was said by some that Keane had borrowed and forgot to return them, while others believed that they had accompanied Sháh Shujá on his march to Kábul[1].

On the road from Ghazní to Kábul Nott encountered 12,000 Afgháns under his old enemy Shams-ud-dín, strongly posted on the hill-ranges in his front. On the 15th of September this new obstacle was entirely cleared out of Nott's path. 'Our troops,' he wrote to Pollock, 'beat them and dislodged them in gallant style; and their conduct afforded me the greatest satisfaction.' Their war-worn leader was not sorry to give his men and cattle a few days' rest in the bracing Kábul valley, which lay 6,000 feet above the sea. On that very day, the 17th, Pollock requested him to send off a brigade in support of Shakespear. Nott, while ready to obey his superior's order, ventured 'most respectfully to protest against it,' for reasons of undeniable cogency. The duty which he begged to

[1] Stocqueler's *Life of Sir William Nott*; *Afghan Papers*.

decline was accepted, not without demur, by Sir Robert Sale.

Sale's column had made but one march from Kábul when, on the 20th, its leader came upon the erewhile prisoners riding quietly along, escorted by Shakespear's troopers and a body of Afghán horse, whose commander, Sálah Muhammad, had lately agreed for a handsome bribe to lead back in freedom from Bámián the hostages and prisoners entrusted to his charge. The same man who, in 1840, had deserted the Sháh for Dost Muhammad, was now engaged in rescuing Pottinger's party from the fate to which Akbar would have consigned them. The prisoners signed an agreement to pay him 20,000 rupees down and a pension of £1,200 a year, besides a handsome gratuity for his troops. On the 12th of September Sálah Muhammad hoisted the British colours over his fort. The news of Akbar's flight from Tazín emboldened the whole party to set out on the 16th for Kábul. Next day Shakespear's horsemen rode into view, and the combined force pushed on until all fear of further danger was dispelled on the 20th by Sale's advance from Argandi. In another moment Sale was embracing the manly hearted wife and widowed daughter from whom he had been parted for ten months; while Henry Lawrence, whose detachment of Sikhs had been doing good service with Pollock's force, now clasped hands with the brother for whose freedom two months earlier he would gladly have surrendered his own. On the evening of the 21st Pottinger's party were enthusias-

tically welcomed into Pollock's camp. One of the prisoners, John Conolly, had died of fever some time before, and another, Captain Bygrave, was still in Akbar's hands. But he too was allowed, a few days later, to rejoin his anxious friends[1].

The recovery of the captives was hailed by our countrymen both in India and at home as the crowning achievement of Pollock's army. Far different had been the lot of two other captives in a country less accessible to our influence. Of Colonel Stoddart's bootless mission to Bokhára some mention has been made already. His fellow-prisoner, Arthur Conolly, who had travelled much in Central Asia, was despatched by his uncle, Sir W. Macnaghten, in 1840 on a special mission to the ruler of Khokán, the Firghána of Bábar's day, one of those 'oasis Khanates' which dot the expanse of rolling plains watered by the Oxus and the Jaxartes. From Khokán the eager Irishman went on to Bokhára, in the vain hope of rescuing Stoddart from the confinement to which he had been subjected by the merciless tyrant then ruling in the central seat of Timúr's empire. Conolly's arrival from a hostile Khanate served only to inflame the Amír's ill feeling towards the infidel invaders of Afghánistán. His letter to the Queen of England remained unanswered, and Lord's aggressive movements towards the Oxus had inspired him with a lively fear for his own safety. Lord Auckland would not go to war for the release of an agent who refused

[1] *Afghan Papers*; Kaye.

to save himself through the intervention of a Russian envoy. Conolly reached Bokhára, only to fall into the clutches of a potentate who regarded him as a mere spy.

The Amír of Bokhára placed him under arrest and seized all his property. At that time Colonel Stoddart, after many months of cruel suffering patiently borne, had been transferred from a loathsome dungeon to the care of the Russian Envoy. But the rising at Kábul wrought a change for the worse in the Amír's temper. Stoddart and Conolly were placed together in rigorous confinement, and ere long the Russian envoy was glad to escape from Bokhára with his life. Early in 1842 the Amír set forth on his campaign against Khokán. Many efforts had meanwhile been made from many quarters, from Petersburg, London, and Constantinople, as well as Calcutta and Herát, to obtain the release of the hapless pair; but in vain. On the 1st of October, 1842, Lord Ellenborough wrote to the Amír on behalf of the two 'innocent travellers'; but he wrote too late. Soon after the Amír's return to Bokhára their fate was sealed. On the 17th of June Stoddart and Conolly were led out of prison and publicly beheaded. Such at least was the story told to Rawlinson at Kábul, in the middle of September, by one of Stoddart's servants, who spoke as eye-witness of his master's death[1].

[1] Kaye.

CHAPTER XIII

'Pax Asiae Restituta'

If the victories of Nott and Pollock had served to vindicate the honour of our arms, the deliverance of the prisoners, black and white, appealed to a wider range of human sympathies, and tapped a purer fount of patriotic sentiment. But the task imposed upon our troops appeared to be still incomplete, while a large remnant of Akbar's forces kept the field in the Kohistán. Towards the close of September two brigades under General McCaskill were sent to break up a force which might else annoy our troops on their march homewards. McCaskill, aided and advised by Havelock, discharged his errand with full success. The strong and populous town of Istálíf, climbing up the terraced hillside from a sea of bloom and verdure below, was filled with families who had come for shelter to 'the maiden city' from the perils of war elsewhere. It was carried by storm on the 29th of September with trifling loss; the women and children streaming in white-robed crowds up the mountain beyond, as Broadfoot's Sappers and the 9th Foot rushed in. The town was plundered and set on fire.

Chárikár, which had witnessed the slaughter of Haughton's Gúrkhas, was utterly destroyed, and McCaskill got back to Kábul by the 7th of October.

Nott, meanwhile, was fretting under the long halt at Kábul, for which he could see no adequate reason. He thought that Pollock gave too much heed to his political officers. He grumbled at the time wasted on McCaskill's raid into the Kohistán. 'Had I commanded'—he writes to his daughter on the 7th of October—'I would have blown up the famed Bálá Hissár, and at this moment should have had my little veteran army at Pesháwar.' Unfortunately Nott, at this time, 'had nothing to do with public affairs.' Pollock was persuaded to spare the Bálá Hissár, and to destroy instead the Great Bazaar, where Macnaghten's mangled remains had been exposed. Even the brave and pious Henry Lawrence had no word of blame for an act of vengeance which fell most heavily upon the least guilty classes of the Afghán community. It took our engineers two days to blow up the massive walls of the Chár Chatar, or place of 'Four Bazaars,' said to be the noblest building of its kind in Asia [1].

The work of demolishing what Pollock himself called 'the grand emporium of trade in this part of Central Asia,' was hardly finished when the work of unlicensed plunder and violence, as foreseen by Nott himself, began. In spite of Pollock's precautions, soldiers and followers from both camps, impelled by a report that Kábul itself was to be given over to plunder, rushed

[1] Stocqueler's *Life of Nott*; Edwardes; Kaye.

into the city at every unguarded point, and fired the houses and pillaged the shops of friend and foe. Many hundreds of harmless tradesmen, Hindu as well as Muhammadan, who had but lately re-opened their shops, now saw themselves ruined, and their families exposed to wanton outrage. Even the friendly Kazilbásh quarter narrowly escaped its share in the general havoc. No wonder that the Duke of Wellington, writing afterwards to the Governor-General, expressed his deep surprise that the officer who ordered the destruction of the bazaar did not put himself at the head of half his army, and 'take care to protect the town from the pillage and destruction which it was certain must be the consequence by the other half of the army[1].'

At last, on the 12th of October, 1842, the combined forces under Pollock's command marched off from Kábul, taking with them the blind old Zemán Sháh, whose name had been one of dread to the India of Wellesley's time, and his nephew, Fathi Jang, who preferred a retreat across the Indus to the dangers of a royalty unsupported by our arms and gold. A crowd of famishing Hindus from Ghazní and Kábul, with hundreds of crippled Sepoys and camp-followers, relics of the Kábul and Ghazní garrisons, and a long train of warlike trophies, encumbered the retreat of an army whose achievements the Governor-General had been prompt to recognize and reward. The troops marched in three columns, Pollock leading, and the

[1] Lord Colchester's *Indian Administration of Lord Ellenborough*.

Hero of Kandahár bringing up the rear. Both Pollock and Nott were soon forced to blow up and abandon some of the captured guns. Sale's flanking columns cleared the way for Pollock's unhindered retreat to Gandamak; but the columns of McCaskill and Nott had some sharp skirmishing with Ghilzai brigands on their way across the Haft Kotal.

The defences of Jalálábád were destroyed before Pollock received the order to hand that place over intact to the Sikhs. On the march from Dháka to Alí Masjid one of McCaskill's brigades lost in the darkness a gun, which Nott's column next day recovered after a short fight. Nott's engineers completely destroyed the fort of Alí Masjid. By the 7th of November the whole force was encamped on the plains of Peshávar. Meanwhile another army, assembled at Firozpur under Sir Jasper Nicolls, warned the Sikhs, whose goodwill had long been doubted, against any attempt to hinder the march of our victorious troops across the Punjab [1].

In the first days of Pollock's halt at Kábul, Lord Ellenborough had amused himself at Simla in drawing up a proclamation which was issued on the 10th, but dated the 1st of October, as if to challenge direct comparison with Lord Auckland's Manifesto of the 1st of October, 1838. In this memorable State paper he proclaimed his intention to withdraw the British arms from Afghánistán, 'content with the limits nature appears to have assigned to' our Indian Empire.

[1] *Afghan Papers*; Kaye.

'Disasters unparalleled in their extent, unless by the errors in which they originated, and by the treachery by which they were completed,' had been avenged in one short campaign, and repeated victories had proved the invincibility of our arms. The policy of forcing a sovereign upon a reluctant people was expressly disavowed, as 'tending to place the arms and resources of that people at the disposal of the first invader;' and the Afgháns were left free to create a government for themselves 'amidst the anarchy which is the consequence of their crimes.' Thenceforth the enormous expense of maintaining a large army 'in a false position, at a distance from its own frontier and resources,' would no longer arrest the progress of internal improvement; the great Indian army 'will stand in unassailable strength upon its own soil;' and the Indian Government 'will devote all its efforts to the establishment and maintenance of general peace,' to the protection of the Native Princes, and the well-being of its own subjects.

A second proclamation, dated five days later, announced to all the princes, chiefs, and people of India the early restoration of the Gates of Somnáth to the country whence they had been carried off. 'The insult of eight hundred years is at last avenged. The gates of the temple of Somnáth, so long the memorial of your humiliation, are become the proudest record of your national glory.' To the princes and chiefs of Sirhind, of Rájwára, of Málwa, and of Gujarát, 'this glorious trophy of successful war' was to be

committed, as soon as it reached 'the foot of the bridge of the Sutlej;' and they themselves were to transmit 'the gates of sandalwood,' with all honour, through their respective territories to the restored temple of Somnáth. 'The progress of the gates from Firozpur to Somnáth'—wrote Lord Ellenborough to the Queen—'will be one great national triumph, and their restoration to India will endear the Government to the whole people [1].'

If the former of these manifestos raised some doubts of their author's good taste in holding up Lord Auckland's policy and agents to public censure, the bombastic address to 'All the princes and chiefs and people of India' was read by our countrymen everywhere amid shouts of uncontrollable merriment. At first, indeed, most people regarded it as a mere newspaper squib, not as the genuine product of high official unwisdom. At home, as in India, it was received with general derision by all who were readier to laugh than to weep over an effusion at once so farcical and so full of mischief. It was, in truth, what Kaye calls it, 'a *bêtise* of the first magnitude.' The 'brothers and friends' addressed by the Governor-General included many millions of Muhammadans, and not a few Muhammadan princes, some of them descended from the countrymen of Mahmúd. In what light would these regard the honours destined for 'this glorious trophy of successful war?' And how many of the Hindu princes and people had ever heard of the alleged

[1] *Afghan Papers*; Lord Colchester.

insult to their faith, or would care a cowrie for the recapture of a trophy desecrated by so many centuries of close connexion with a Muhammadan mosque? It is more than doubtful whether any gates were ever carried off from Somnáth; while there is no doubt that the gates which Nott brought back to India were made much later than the eleventh century, of no wood more precious than deal or deodar.

While the armies of Nott and Pollock were marching leisurely across the Punjab, Lord Ellenborough was diligently planning out the details of such a pageant as British India had never before seen. A brilliant gathering of princes, nobles, officers of state, and English ladies awaited his arrival on the 9th of December at Firozpur. The Army of Reserve under Nicolls were encamped on the adjacent plain. From Lahore Sher Singh had sent his son and his chief minister with a suitable escort, to take part in the coming festival. Hundreds of elephants with painted trunks and gay trappings were daily trained in the manœuvres which Lord Ellenborough's theatrical fancy had devised. Triumphal arches were set up at various points; and a bridge of boats, decked out with blue, yellow, and red bunting, had been thrown across the Sutlej. leading up to a bamboo scaffolding which, with its many-hued streamers, did duty for the principal arch.

On the 17th of December Sale crossed the bridge at the head of his 'illustrious garrison,' who laughed aloud as they passed under the gaudy gallows-like

structure at the bridge-head[1]. From this point the Governor-General himself led the column through a double line of elephants, which knelt down at the given signal, but forgot to trumpet forth those notes of welcome which they had been learning for some days past. The guns, however, did their duty; the bands struck up 'The Conquering Hero;' and regiment after regiment of Nicolls's 20,000 troops, drawn up in a line nearly three miles long, presented arms in turn to Sale's brigade. Two days later Pollock crossed the Sutlej, and on the 23rd Nott himself arrived, bringing with him the legendary Gates, escorted by several British officers and a strong guard of Sepoys. Both generals were duly welcomed by Ellenborough at the bridge-head; but the special honours lavished on Sale's brigade were withheld, in spite of Nicolls's pleadings, from the victors of Tazín and the yet more deserving garrison of Kandahár. There was much feasting and rejoicing that Christmas throughout all the camps. The Sepoys were regaled with heaps of 'their favourite *mehtoys*,' or sweetmeats, by the Governor-General's express command. As a fitting close to a great triumphal pageant, the assembled armies—about 40,000 strong with a hundred guns—were manœuvred by Sir Jasper Nicolls on the wide Firozpur plain, in the presence of Lord Ellenborough and a notable group of visitors from Europe as well as the East.

Our countrymen in India could now, as some of

[1] Low.

them said, 'look a Native fairly in the face again.' But India had to pay the full price, not only of the reckless policy proclaimed in October 1838, but of the victorious reprisals announced in October 1842. And our latest victories had served only to deepen the hatred felt by every honest Afghán towards the invaders of his native land. To the bitter memories of the past four years Lord Ellenborough was nearly adding another. He had already proclaimed his intention to set Dost Muhammad, his family, and all other Afghán prisoners, free; but the Amír was at first commanded to present himself at the Governor-General's *Darbár* in the camp at Firozpur. Happily the popular outcry shamed his Lordship into revoking a decree so unworthy of a strong English governor, so insulting to the throneless exile who, during his brief stay in Calcutta, had been treated by Lord Auckland as an honoured guest. Dost Muhammad was allowed to return without conditions to the country where his son Akbar was already ruling in the place of the young Saduzai Prince Sháhpur, who had just fled for safety to Pesháwar. On taking leave of the Governor-General, the Amír was asked his opinion of the English in India. 'I have been struck,' he answered, 'with the magnitude of your power and your resources, with your ships, your arsenals, and your armies; but I cannot understand why the rulers of so great an empire should have gone across the Indus to deprive me of my poor and barren country[1].'

[1] *Afghan Papers*; Kaye; Marshman.

In the course of January, 1843, the Army of Reserve was broken up, and the Governor-General pursued his way through Delhi to Agra, with the Gates of Somnáth in his train. At holy places like Mathra and Bindrában they found some Bráhman worshippers; but at Agra their triumphal progress came to a full stop. They were left to moulder in the *Diwán-i-Am*, or audience-hall of the Fort.

It was at Agra that the new-made Earl of Ellenborough invested George Pollock and William Nott with the Grand Cross of the Bath, the least possible reward that a grateful nation could have bestowed upon the two men to whose bold leadership the Governor-General owed his earldom and England the re-gilding of her tarnished fame. Sir Robert Sale had received the same honour a few months earlier. Medals and batta were awarded with liberal promptitude to all who had served in the campaign of 1842. Nott was at once preferred by Ellenborough himself to the post of Resident at Lucknow. When illness drove Nott a few months later to England, Pollock filled his place. Both of them received from the Court of Directors a pension of £1,000 a year. But not until 1872, twenty-seven years after Nott's death, was Pollock rewarded, at Mr. Gladstone's request, with a baronetcy.

Writing, on the 4th of February 1843, to Lord Ellenborough, the Duke of Wellington warned him to expect a stormy debate on the motion for a vote of thanks to all concerned in the recent campaign.

On the 16th the vote was moved by the Duke himself in the House of Lords, and by Sir Robert Peel in the Commons. The good old Duke spoke warmly in praise of his friend and colleague, and, according to Greville, he spoke 'marvellously well.' He went so far as to describe Ellenborough's letter to Nott of the 4th of July, as the 'handsomest instructions he had ever seen given by any authority to any officer.' His somewhat slighting reference to the services of Sir George Pollock—for of Nott he thought highly—was amply repaired by Peel in one of his most eloquent speeches. Several of the Whig leaders in both houses sharply criticized Lord Ellenborough's acts and utterances. Lord John Russell summed up his Lordship's merits in the fact that he had ordered supplies for the troops collected by Lord Auckland, and that he 'did not prevent the forward operations against Ghazní and Kábul, but gave General Nott full liberty, if he thought right, to relinquish the attempt.' One sturdy Radical, Joseph Hume, proposed to exclude the Governor-General, pending further inquiry, from the vote of thanks. Lord Auckland's contribution to the debates did credit to his own good sense, his magnanimity, and his public spirit. His praise of our officers and men was qualified by no abuse of the Governor-General [1].

The vote of thanks passed through both Houses without a division, for the Whigs knew their Parliamentary weakness too well to push resistance beyond words.

[1] Lord Colchester; *Greville Memoirs*; Low.

Pax Asiae restituta—'Peace restored to Asia'—was the legend of a medal struck by Lord Ellenborough's command in memory of our late successes against the Afghâns and the Chinese. And yet the vote of thanks had hardly been carried, before the peace thus proudly vaunted was broken by the march of Napier's little army against the forces of the Sind Amírs. The conquest of Sind, which gave us absolute command of the Lower Indus, formed the last scene of the sad political drama which opened with the Tripartite Treaty and the Simla Manifesto. That 'useful piece of rascality,' as Napier himself called it, served to emphasize the wild injustice of the policy which had sent our armies across the Indus to strike down the shadowy Frankenstein of Russian intrigue.

One good thing, however, came out of the Kâbul disasters. For thirty-five years thereafter no sane English statesman cared to meddle with the internal politics of Afghânistân. When a Persian army in 1856 once more attacked Herât, a timely alliance with Dost Muhammad and the march of Outram's army along the Persian Gulf enabled us at little cost to compel the retreat of the Persian army from the captured city, and to make the Shâh's Government sue for peace on our own terms.

For the first three years after his return home Lord Auckland lived a quiet uneventful life. He never married, but one or another of his maiden sisters kept house for him at Beckenham or in London. He seems to have borne with dignified calmness the strong

reaction of public feeling caused by the Kábul catastrophe, for which he was only in part to blame. Among his many friends was Lord Metcalfe, who returned from Canada in the last days of 1845, dying of the cancer which killed him in the following September. On the 12th of January, 1846, Lord Auckland took the chair at a meeting held in the Oriental Club by a number of eminent Anglo-Indians, eager to sign the address of admiring sympathy which the chairman duly presented to their common friend in his own room [1].

When Lord John Russell came into office during the same year, Lord Auckland took his seat in the Cabinet as First Lord of the Admiralty. There 'his conduct of affairs,' says Greville, 'his diligence, his urbanity, his fairness and impartiality, have been the theme of loud and general praise.' He lived to see the beginning of the Second Sikh War which turned the Punjab into a British-Indian province, and brought our north-western frontier to the mouth of the Kháibar Pass. In the last days of 1848 he went down to The Grange, Lord Ashburton's seat in Hampshire. At that time he appears to have been in perfect health. On the 30th of December he went out shooting with a party of friends, and was struck down with a fit of apoplexy on his way home. On the morning of New Year's Day, 1849, he breathed his last. He was buried five days later in the family vault at Beckenham; 'leaving behind him'—says Greville—

[1] Kaye's *Life of Lord Metcalfe*.

'a memory universally honoured and regretted, and cherished by the tender affection and inconsolable grief of his family and friends.' His earldom died with him; but his brother Robert, afterwards Bishop of Bath and Wells, succeeded to the barony[1].

[1] *Greville Memoirs*; *Dictionary of National Biography.*

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